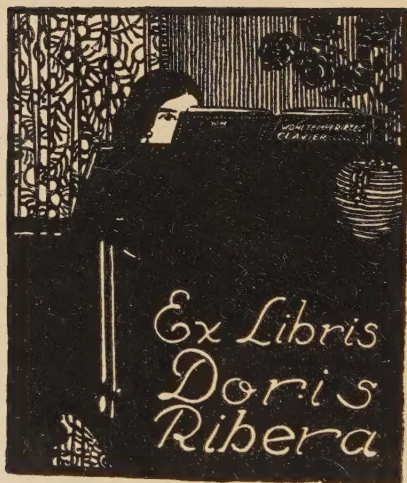


RIMSKY-KORSAKOF


M. MONTAGU-NATHAN



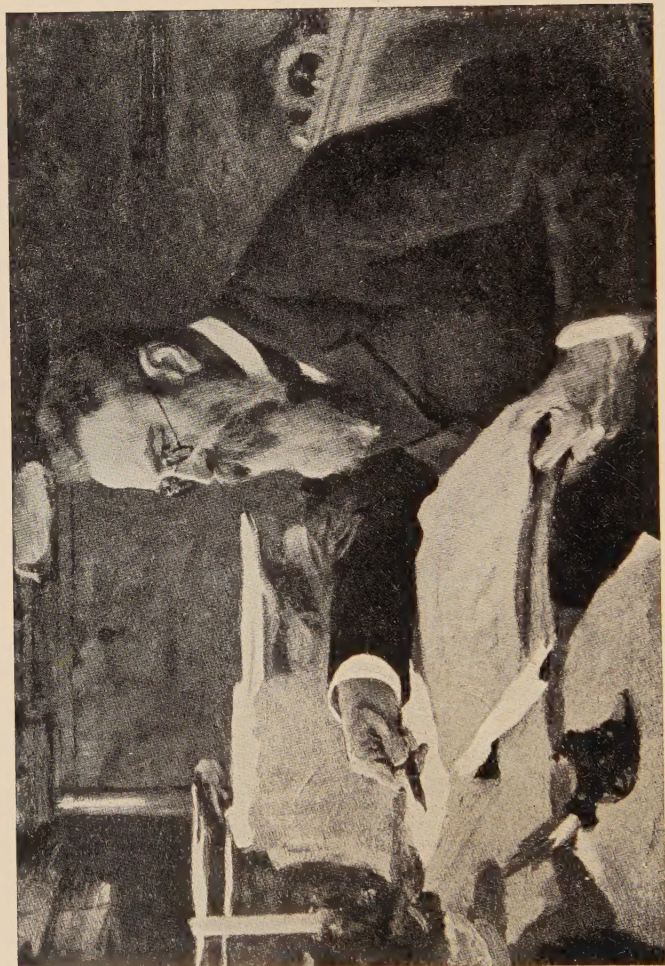
MASTERS OF RUSSIAN MUSIC



RIMSKY-KORSAKOF



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RIMSKY-KORSAKOV
From a portrait by Serof

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(MASTERS OF RUSSIAN MUSIC)

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t. RIMSKY - KORSAKOF

BY

^{Montagu}
MONTAGU - NATHAN

AUTHOR OF "A HISTORY OF RUSSIAN MUSIC"

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v

RIMSKY-KORSAKOF

INTRODUCTION

STUDENTS of Slavonic Literature—a subject that deserves the earnest attention of all who would understand Russian music—are aware that the poets of the first quarter of the nineteenth century were for the most part in revolt against the then prevalent worship of Classicism in art, and that with the early works of Pushkin a movement aiming at the enthronement of Nationalism was initiated.

The parallel force in music can hardly be called a movement, since the prime mover was a man who, at a moment when isolated from nationalistic influences, stumbled upon the truth by accident. Michael Ivanovich Glinka, listening to music in Italy, suddenly became possessed by an intense longing for a kind of music that would speak to him of his native land. At that moment he had little more than his profound love of music to help him, for his technical knowledge was of the scantiest. His conviction that the music of the People—a vast though neglected store of melody—could be used as the basis of art-music was sufficient. The result of Glinka's effort has been acclaimed by

several generations, and his fame as the composer of "A Life for the Tsar" is ever on the increase.

But it was not until the fifties that Russian musical nationalism really became a movement. Active propaganda did not begin until that fateful evening when the two young reformers, Mili Alexeyevich Balakiref and Cesar Antonovich Cui, met at a concert in Petrograd, and agreed that in the foundation of a national Russian Music they had a common cause worthy of their labours. It was then that the first word of a glorious page in Russian musical history was written. Their activities were more or less limited until Borodin and Moussorgsky joined in their deliberations, and the campaign was not fully launched until the great art-critic, V. V. Stassof, and the composer Dargomijsky, whose reputation was already established, associated themselves with the little band.

Curiously enough it was the last recruit, and the one least musically educated, who was destined to achieve more for Russian musical nationalism than any of his comrades. When young Rimsky-Korsakof joined the group he had nothing to contribute beyond an enthusiasm for the joint ideal. His technical understanding of the art of music was virtually *nil*; he had heard comparatively little, and he did not possess the saving grace that gave Moussorgsky a certain power among them—a gift for piano-playing. Like Glinka, he regarded the national ideal as something affecting him personally and profoundly. If anything could bring into action the creative faculty he felt was his, it

this need for the expression of the Soul of Russia in its music—the chief topic of discussion among the “Five.”

Historians relate that in Balakiref and Dargomijsky, both personally known to Glinka, the “father of Russian Opera” saw the upholders of the tradition he had founded. Events have proved that the young naval cadet, who thought of the composer of “A Life for the Tsar” rather as a god than as a mortal, was the one on whose shoulders the mantle of Glinka really fell.

For Rimsky-Korsakof was by nature both a nationalist and a propagandist. He was, moreover, a thorough Russian in another sense. He was possessed of the spirit that drives a man to undertake the apparently impossible. And this faculty has saved both himself and the cause he represented from destruction at the hands of a reactionary opposition. Begging the question in the argument *contra* Nationalism, its opponents never tired of referring to the technical deficiencies of its advocates. To this Rimsky-Korsakof found only one answer possible. Already recognized as a gifted composer, he addressed himself to an arduous course of technical study, from which he eventually emerged with so great a mastery as to arouse the envy of the most experienced and respected composer of his day, Tchaikovsky. Henceforth Nationalism was to be free of the stigma of being advocated by dilettanti—its future was assured. The naval officer had become a musician at whose technical attainments none could cavil.

But his respect for the original ideal was not in any degree impaired by the erudition with which his studies had endowed him. Just as the poets of the previous century, prior to the reconstruction of the mutilated Russian tongue, had been obliged to equip their stringless lyre before it could be used, so had Rimsky-Korsakof been confronted with the task of constructing his own personal medium of expression. Having acquired the means, he proved his worthiness to attain the end by showing that the hardly-won instrument was in the hands of a true bard.

That Rimsky-Korsakof was a poet no one can doubt who has read his impressions of the ocean, recorded when, as a naval cadet, he cruised in the southern seas. They recall Gogol's famous descriptions of the steppes. Yet while a poet, he was not lacking in the stuff of which reformers are made.

When quite a youth he was proud to number himself among the champions of free-thought, and he found scope for its advocacy among his comrades aboard the clipper in which he made his tour of the world—some of them being inclined to uphold the old *régime* of serfdom and obscurantism. Reading of these discussions, one is reminded of the young Krapotkin, who at about the same time, while a member of the Imperial Corps of Pages, was awakening to a conscious sympathy with liberal principles.

Fortunately for the composer he was able to envelop his protests in a veil that was but rarely penetrated by the eye of authority, though he did not altogether

escape censure. He became embroiled in the troubles of 1905 when pleading for the self-government he deemed necessary to the future welfare of the Petrograd Conservatoire, over which he was then presiding; and it was not for nothing that the students chose the symbolical "Kashchei" as the opera to be performed at the complimentary gathering held in his honour.

Yet his was not in the least a pugnacious character, and his music would as well have represented a man who held that the function of music began and ended with the expression of beauty.

It has, however, done far more than that. In his fifteen operas Rimsky-Korsakof has collected all the elements of art-nationalism. He has taken the folk-tales of Pushkin from the fireside and has brought them into the theatre, where an assembly may be made free of them; he has rescued the folk-song from the printed volume in which it had but an ethnological significance, and has given it back to those from whom it came. He has revealed the sources from which the all-pervading spirituality of the Russian People has sprung, and has introduced into his music-dramas a vast amount of episodic material that, as a means of playing upon the emotions of his audience, is just as effective as any folk-song or fairy-tale.

In his own words he has "listened to the People," and has restored to them their own product embellished by the touch of the artist.

"The People are the creators," said Glinka, "we

are but the arrangers." The output of Rimsky-Korsakof forbids the use of such a term as "arrangement" to describe it. His art is a re-creation, and its substance is transfigured by the glow of his inspiration.

PART I

CAREER

I.

NIKOLAI ANDREYEVICH RIMSKY-KORSAKOF was born on March 6th, 1844 (O.S.), at Tikhvin, in the Government of Novgorod. The early signs of musical aptitude shown by the child cannot have come as a great surprise to his parents, since they were accustomed to enliven a rather dull provincial life with musical pursuits of a more or less elementary nature. His father, a retired civil Governor and landed proprietor, played the piano pretty well, and his fingers, if a little halting, were capable of giving a fairly good account of his favourite tunes from such operas as Mehul's "Joseph," "Tancredi," and "The Magic Flute." In her youth his mother had been a pianist whose defects were more conspicuous than her qualities; one of the former—a tendency, when singing, to reduce the speed of the song—was inherited by her son. She had a brother who was musically gifted and who, although entirely untrained, was able to play quite a number of piano pieces by ear.

The youngster's first practical demonstration of musical sensibility was his manipulation of a drum-

stick; with this instrument he showed himself capable of keeping accurate time to his father's performance on the piano, despite frequent deliberately executed variations of rhythm and tempo. Before receiving any serious instruction he discovered that he possessed the faculty of "absolute pitch."*

When six years old he began to learn the piano. His first teacher was an elderly lady who lived near by. She taught the little fellow for about two years, at the close of which time she confessed herself at the end of her tutorial resources. The avowal was as opportune as it was frank. The lad had not found her tuition at all inspiring; from his own account we learn that so far he had not experienced any consciousness of a love for music—he merely tolerated it, displaying a moderate diligence in his studies.

He was now placed under the guidance of a governess attached to a neighbouring family, and during the next three years made solid progress. On her departure a year or so later she left him to the care of the young lady in whose family she had been employed. At the end of the ensuing three years, at the age of twelve, he passed through the first of two serious crises in his musical career.

It has been said that the boy had not up to this time displayed any considerable liking for music.

He was much fonder of child-like games than of

* In after life he declared that his ear had become very much impaired owing to the difference in the pitches adopted by the orchestras of the Conservatoire and the Imperial Chapel.

music, and the passion for mimicry was particularly noticeable. Neither he nor his parents had ever dreamed of the possibility of his becoming a great musician, and his demeanour in childhood was naturally regarded as being normal and healthy. He was particularly fond of those games in which there was plenty of scope for the imitation of "grown-ups."

His parents intended him to follow a naval career. His elder brother and his uncle were both in the Service, and the time was drawing near when he would enter the Petrograd Naval College. The letters written home by his brother, now a lieutenant, had played upon his imagination, and these, together with some books of travel, aroused in him an ardent desire for a sailor's life.

Curiously enough, it was a love not so much for music as for mimicry which was instrumental in convincing the boy that he was the possessor of musical ability beyond the common, and in preserving the seed of the plant that in due season blossomed forth so wondrously. The impulse that drove young Nikolai to don paper spectacles and dismember a watch prompted him to play at being a composer.

His youthful attempts at composition were regarded by those around him with the same degree of amusement as his horological experiments; there can be little doubt, however, that his attitude towards music subsequent to his arrival (in 1856) at the Naval College would have been very different but for this apparently unimportant experience of the function of composing.

II.

Migration from the country to the capital brought with it opportunities of hearing music in the larger forms. With some friends of his brother's, the Golovins, young Rimsky-Korsakof frequently visited the Opera; he took a fancy to "Lucia" and "Robert," and was immediately impressed by the stirring scenes and music in "A Life for the Tsar." He was particularly pleased with "Russlan and Ludmilla," and was not a little concerned to discover that so few of his friends agreed with him as to its merits. Enraptured with the Persian music, one of the most popular features of this opera, he arranged it for 'cello and piano, and played it in this home-made version with an acquaintance.

His choice of instruments needs explanation.

The removal to Petrograd had of course necessitated a change of teacher. On settling down at the college he began to take lessons with a 'cellist named Ulich, a member of the Alexandrinsky Theatre orchestra. The pupil does not appear to have greatly respected his master's abilities. But the occasional visits to the theatre prevented a total disappearance of his interest in music. The youth felt himself becoming fascinated by the art; yet he was quite satisfied with his own music-making, at this time that of the most primitive amateur. To use his own words, he was merely "trifling with it."

He would probably have gone on trifling for the rest of his life had it not happened that Ulich, after some years of altogether desultory instruction, induced the young student to seek a teacher better qualified to guide him. So it was that towards the close of his fourth year at college, Kanillé, a well-known and esteemed musician, was engaged to take his musical education in hand.

Under the new master the smouldering interest soon burst into a flame of enthusiasm. Encouraged by Kanillé, he began to make some essays in composition of a more ambitious kind than any he had hitherto attempted. He was initiated into the mysteries of the orchestra, and the elementary technique of its constituents was explained to him. From Kanillé Rimsky-Korsakof heard for the first time of Balakiref.

What a shock it must have been to the budding composer when, after a year of more or less serious study, just at the moment, in fact, when he had begun to loosen the bonds of complete ignorance, his elder brother, who naturally enough regarded music as merely a pastime and looked upon a moderate proficiency in piano-playing as the *ultima thule* of every amateur, announced that in his opinion no further lessons could possibly be necessary ! Kanillé, while bowing to this decree, refused to allow the lessons to be interrupted, and they were continued unofficially and, it would seem, gratuitously.

On a memorable day in November, 1861, master and pupil sallied forth together to call on Balakiref,

with whom the former was of course acquainted. The fruits of this visit did not come to maturity until some years later; in the interim they came near to being nipped in the bud.

There is no denying that this first visit to the house of the leader of the modern Russian School of music was an episode of the utmost importance in the career of Rimsky-Korsakof. Hitherto his musical environment had been, speaking generally, conventional and not at all progressive. His early association with Balakiref, whose education had been anything but academical, gave him at the beginning of his musical career an outlook upon the art that was to become for a time characteristic of the "New Russian School" as a whole.

III.

Thus Rimsky-Korsakof, a lad of seventeen, ignorant of nearly all the fundamental theoretic principles of the musical art, but nevertheless devoted to it, now found himself accepted and welcomed as the latest and youngest disciple of modernism. The small circle of five musicians, destined to become so famous for its advocacy of nationalism and progress, was not yet complete.

Already five years had elapsed since César Cui, who in 1850 had come from Vilna to enter the Petrograd School of Military Engineering, had been introduced by Dargomijsky—then a well-known operatic composer—to Balakiref. Their first meeting,

which took place at a quartet concert, was, as the written history of modern music reveals, the foundation of the New Russian movement.

Balakiref was relatively well qualified to assume, as he did, the rôle of leadership of the band of five young amateurs. His acquaintance with Cui is now acknowledged as an episode of great portents; but auspicious though it may have been, it must have produced a much fainter impression on Balakiref than the occasion on which he produced his letter of introduction to the composer of "A Life for the Tsar." Glinka had quickly recognized his young worshipper's gifts, and had perceived him to be well fitted to carry on the tradition which he himself had founded.

Balakiref's musical education had been rather peculiar; but considering the circumstances, and especially the moderate qualifications of his associates, he was justified in regarding it as at least comparatively extensive.

Having spent much of his boyhood under the roof of Oulibishef (the biographer of Mozart and depreciator of Beethoven), he had availed himself to the full of the opportunities of study and research afforded him by the splendid library of musical works amassed by the eminent writer. Besides a good working knowledge of musical form and composition, and of the theory if not of the practice of orchestration, he possessed a remarkable gift for piano-playing, and an exceptional talent for reading at sight. He does not appear to have been in the least influenced by Oulibishef's

notorious reactionary tendencies; they may be reckoned rather to have awakened in him a desire to probe more deeply into the mysteries of Beethoven's last creative phase, and to acquire a wide knowledge of contemporary musical currents.

Cui was also more or less a self-taught musician. But the third recruit to the modernist movement was one who, despite a sound early training, never ceased his energetic repudiation of traditional methods. The views of Modeste Moussorgsky are no longer in need of championship, for they have received the endorsement of the entire musical world.

Upwards of a year after the inauguration of the weekly meetings between Balakiref and Cui the latter brought with him one evening the young guardsman whom he had met at Dargomijsky's house. As a friend of the composer of "Russalka," Moussorgsky was already known to a section of musical society in Petrograd, and Korsakof had heard something of him from Kanillé.

These, then, were the companions of his leisure hours during the period of his studies at the Naval College.

He was deeply impressed by this totally strange musical environment. Satisfied himself that the art of music could not flourish without progress, he had been grieved to find so little acquiescence in his views among the outside world. Once within the Balakiref Circle, he perceived that not only did these sentiments form the foundation of the accepted creed, but that

his new associates evinced a disregard for traditionalism that was as refreshing as it was daring.

Rimsky-Korsakof was also profoundly influenced by the conspicuous musical gifts of Balakiref, who in turn took a considerable interest in his young disciple. At his suggestion the material for a symphony, the fruit of a first attempt to apply the principles of Kanillé's teachings, was put into shape, and additions thereto were made under his watchful eye.

A rude interruption was, however, to disconcert the novice just at the moment when for the first time he felt himself likely to become an influence in the world of music. His college course being at an end, he had now to spend two or three years on an ocean cruise. When his appointment to the *Almaz* arrived, he did his level best to induce his brother to allow him to relinquish the naval career. But this effort, though receiving the sanction and support of Balakiref, who was greatly upset at the impending rupture, was unavailing, and after spending the summer at Kronstadt, where his ship was being fitted out for the cruise, he bade a rather sorrowful good-bye to his musical friends on October 19th, 1862. Two days later the *Almaz* put out to sea.

IV.

As may well be imagined, the long foreign cruise contributed very little to Rimsky-Korsakof's musical development, though, as has been conjectured by more than one writer, the wonderful tonal pictures of the

sea, painted by him in such works as "Sadko" and "Sheherazade," were undoubtedly inspired by impressions gained afloat. His musical experiences during the cruise were few. While at Gravesend, where the ship remained for four months, he made an operative pilgrimage to Covent Garden;* later, during a stay of some three months in New York, he heard two operas that had already a warm place in his affections, namely, "Robert" and "Faust." He occasionally played the piano for the entertainment of his mess-mates and guests; and he records the performance of some duets with an American pilot, a violinist.

The passion for composition quickly grew cold. The Andante for the symphony, begun before leaving Russia, and continued at Balakiref's written suggestion while at anchor in the mouth of the Thames, appears to have been the only instance of creative work of any permanent value during the whole voyage.†

Rimsky-Korsakof began his cruise in a spirit of deep chagrin at being torn willy-nilly from his musical activities and associates. The profession of the sea never appealed very forcibly to him, but it is plain that the pleasures of sight-seeing and of making

* In a letter dated January 20th, 1863, the writer seems at a loss adequately to express his disdain of Howard Glover's music to "Ruy Blas."

† The correspondence between Balakiref and Rimsky-Korsakof, now in course of publication, reveals that several tentative efforts were submitted for the former's approval.

acquaintance with distant lands and seas afforded him by the voyage proved a fairly effective consolation. As time went on he thought less and less about his whilom desire to embrace the musical calling. His indifference to an Italian opera that was being played at Nice, where he made a break in the homeward journey, is not perhaps as significant as it appears at first sight, but it is certain that on reaching his native shores, after nearly three years' absence, his regret that his travels were at an end was almost as keen as had been the sorrow caused by his enforced renunciation of music. According to his own description he was now content to remain merely an "officer-dilettante," in whom every ambition to become a composer had been extinguished.

It was lack of self-knowledge that led the returned wanderer to imagine his aspirations to have withered. They were only dried up through being deprived so long of the musical atmosphere necessary to them, and no sooner did he begin once more to frequent the society of his musician friends than they revived.

During his absence the condition of music in Petrograd had considerably improved. Balakiref, with the assistance of Lomakin, had founded the Free School of Music, and a visit from Wagner had aroused great enthusiasm in the Russian capital.

The Balakiref Circle had secured a valuable recruit in Alexander Porphyrievich Borodin, at that time a professor of chemistry at the Academy of Medicine, and they were now often joined in their deliberations

by other interested individuals, Stassof being the most frequent visitor. Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakof appear to have dispensed with the usual probationary period of acquaintanceship, and to have at once become firm friends. The latter was on more or less intimate terms with Moussorgsky, but his relations with Balakiref and Cui were in the nature of a *conditio pupilli*. Cui had lately obtained the post of musical critic on the staff of a Petrograd journal.

Rimsky-Korsakof's first musical task, set him, of course, by Balakiref, was to put the fragments of the neglected symphony into shape. Balakiref proposed to produce the work, when finished, at the concerts connected with the Free School which were held under his conductorship.

The symphony was duly completed and rehearsed, and was performed on December 19th, 1865. The audience, sympathetic towards the music, became still more favourably disposed when its plaudits were acknowledged by a young officer in uniform. The main body of the press was merely amiable, but Cui wrote a characteristic notice in which he contrived, as was his wont, to show his contempt for Rubinstein. He spoke of his young friend's work as "the first Russian symphony ever written."

Despite a repetition of the success when, in the following spring, the symphony was conducted by the father of the popular composer Lyadof, the young sailor was not inspired to make an immediate addition to the single example standing to his credit.

Early in the summer, however, he conceived the idea of writing an overture on Russian themes, suggested to him by the now well-known work of Balakiref; but beyond the selection of three themes nothing was done until after the summer holiday, which he spent yachting. On coming ashore he got speedily to work, and rapidly completed his overture. It was performed under Balakiref's direction at the Free School in the following December.

Rimsky-Korsakof's account of the double life he led at this time is amusing. By the Balakiref coterie he was looked upon as having a moderate gift for composition, but a deficient pianistic capacity. In his brother's social circle and among his naval friends he had quite a reputation as a pianist, and was much respected both for his knowledge of and judgments upon "serious" music, and for his creative ability. The Balakiref Circle was kept in ignorance of the compliments paid to the versatile young officer by the outside world.

V.

From the year 1866, which found Rimsky-Korsakof installed in furnished rooms in Petrograd, the young composer's renewal of enthusiasm for music may be said to date. He was now enlarging his circle of musical acquaintances—a circle which embraced a number of the most distinguished young artists of the day. In these surroundings he became rapidly *au courant* with the doings of the Petrograd musical world.

Balakiref's encouragement did not cease, and the leader of the "Invincible Band" showed a decided partiality for his young disciple. Early in 1866 the former began to take an interest in the Southern Slav movement, then newly established, and in anticipation of the projected visit of the committee to Petrograd he invited Rimsky-Korsakof to write a Fantasia on Serbian themes, undertaking to give a concert in honour of the event and to compose for it an Overture on Czech melodies. The two works were duly performed in the May following. The Serbian Fantasia, which is dedicated to Borodin, appears to be an isolated instance of the employment of Serbian folk-tunes in art music.

Early in 1867 Rimsky-Korsakof spent an evening, thanks to Balakiref, with Ludmilla Shestakof, the devoted sister of Glinka. On this red-letter day he made the acquaintance of Dargomijsky, then at work upon his epoch-making opera, "The Stone Guest." On his subsequent visits to the house he was often disappointed to find that card-games had a greater attraction for the company than music. But there were compensations for this display of frivolity, and on one occasion the singing of the much esteemed vocalist L. I. Karmalin encouraged him to try his hand at song-writing. The beautiful "Oriental Romance" justifies his satisfaction with the result.

At this time he became quite attached to Mousorgsky. They met frequently, and exchanged musical ideas with greater freedom, it seems, than was possible

in the presence of the monitorial Balakiref. From Moussorgsky he received the suggestion of the subject of "Sadko" as the theme of a symphonic tableau, which he straightway set about composing. To this date belongs also his first meeting with Tchaikovsky, who afterwards conceived for him an admiration which, according to his own confession, was not unmixed with envy.

The winter of 1867 brought with it a season rendered notable by the return visit of Hector Berlioz. A series of concerts was given, of which the conductorship was shared by the distinguished Frenchman and Balakiref. In the latter's programmes figured once more the "Serbian Fantasia" and "Sadko," which scored a great success. This performance of "Sadko" aroused the ire of the reactionary critic Famintsin, who objected to its modernist tendencies. Retorting for the Circle, Moussorgsky composed his famous song "The Classicist." Its text refers to Famintsin's foibles, and its music includes a theme quoted from "Sadko."

Observing that all his friends were busily occupied in the composition of works of an ambitious kind, Rimsky-Korsakof began to think of a further essay in the symphonic form. Unfortunately the new symphony (in B minor) did not proceed very far. Certain strictures made by Balakiref, who was supported by the remaining members of the Circle, discouraged the composer, and he abandoned his effort, having written only a portion of the opening movement.

VI.

The constitution of a national music was not the sole preoccupation of the "Five." The invasion of Russia by alien musicians, invited by the reigning monarchs of the eighteenth century, which had left its mark on Russian musical taste, had provoked the revolt of the "Invincible Band" against foreign music in general. But in pleading for the home product, they were fully alive to the importance of securing for Russian music a respect of which a certain kind of foreign music had not been altogether worthy. Not the least significant item in their agenda was the restoration of Opera to the place of dignity from which it had fallen owing to the licences sanctioned, in construction as well as in performance, by the Italians.

The question of the reconstitution of Opera was eagerly and earnestly canvassed by the young Russian reformers, and they eventually arrived at an agreement upon certain fixed principles. Opera was no longer to be a performance designed solely for the glorification of melody and the gratification of the singer. Instead of consisting of a series of musical and choreographic items loosely strung together by a "plot" that was only tolerated as a connecting link in the entertainment, Opera was henceforth to be a dignified dramatic art. Some of the reforms mooted were of rather a drastic order when considered from the standpoint of a public that was accustomed to every kind of indulgence; but a determination to make no concessions to the worldly taste of the old-fashioned

opera-goer was one of the first points agreed upon. The primary consideration was to be that of the dignity of Opera. Music-drama was to be an art in which the two constituents could be considered as on equal terms. The "plot" was no longer to be interrupted in order to allow of the introduction of a ballet, a chorus, or of a vocal melody having no bearing upon the dramatic content of the work. These things were to enter into the scheme only when the dramatic situation demanded their presence. Music was to be neither the slave nor the tyrant of Drama. The two, by means of a perfect partnership, were to build up an art that would compel the attention and command the respect of the artist and of the thinking public.

These principles were founded upon reason and not upon an existing model. But they appealed so forcibly to Dargomijsky that he proposed to undertake an opera that would conform to them. Feeling that the advice of the young reformers might be of considerable assistance to him, he suggested that the Circle should henceforth meet at his house, and the musical setting of Pushkin's version of the Statue episode from "Don Juan" was proceeded with (in Rimsky-Korsakof's words) "under our very eyes."

"The Stone Guest," hailed on its completion as their "gospel," and styled by Cui—the historian of the group—"the keystone of the New Russian Opera," did not, however, monopolize their evenings; songs and symphonic music, rendered on the piano, also played a part.

At one of them Rimsky-Korsakof began a friendship

that was destined to become a life-partnership. The two sisters, Alexandra and Nadejda Pourgold, the latter of whom he married, were by no means the least active among Dargomijsky's musical set. Alexandra was a singer who took her art very seriously, while Nadejda was a fine pianist and all-round musician. Towards the end of the spring (1868) he met the rest of the Pourgold family, and to his great satisfaction it was arranged that meetings should occasionally be held at their house.

About this time Rimsky-Korsakof's attention was directed once more towards the writing of a symphonic work. At the suggestion of Balakiref and Moussorgsky, he began the now celebrated symphonic suite "Antar," based upon the legend of Senkovsky. The suggestion of an opera having Mey's "The Maid of Pskof" as its dramatic foundation emanated from the same source. Devoting himself with energy to the first project, he composed the second and third movement of "Antar" during the spring of 1868, the remainder following a month or two later. During the summer he spent a good deal of time in the country. The rural environment proved extremely inspiring, and he brought back with him some music illustrative of folk-customs and ceremonials intended for the first act of his opera. A visit to the Pourgolds' country home was also musically productive. Two songs, "Night" and "The Secret," were composed, and he dedicated them to the two sisters. The source of the composer's inspiration was probably no secret.

VII.

When in the autumn the Circle resumed its meetings, two works of absorbing interest were ready for inspection. "The Stone Guest" was virtually complete, and was played over to the little gathering. The second, Moussorgsky's setting of Gogol's "The Matchmaker," in which the composer had been guided by the same ideals as Dargomijsky, excited no little astonishment. The music followed the text of this prose comedy word for word. Every note in the score was devoted either to the reflection of the sentiment of its literary substance or to the pantomimic notation of the gestures and demeanour of the *dramatis personæ*. Apparently the Circle was somewhat alarmed at this thoroughgoing application of its Principles. Even Dargomijsky thought that his disciple had gone a little too far, but the composer of "The Stone Guest" was highly pleased with the general conception of the work.

The latter's health had for some time been failing, and he was not able much longer to afford hospitality to his young adherents. Early in 1869 he died, leaving instructions that the incomplete portions of his opera should be filled in by Cui, its orchestration being entrusted to Rimsky-Korsakof.

In March, 1869, "Antar" was given its first public performance at one of the Russian Musical Society's concerts. It was warmly received by the audience,

but a hard-dying antipathy to the programmatic idea caused the Suite to be unacceptable to some of the old-fashioned critics. The members of the Circle were well accustomed to an opposition on all points that came from the anti-nationalist camp, and Cui, on the former's behalf, was generally prepared with a critical Roland for every Oliver sent forth by their antagonists.

Cui's position was on occasion rendered somewhat difficult by his dual activity as critic and composer. It was in order to cope with a delicate situation that Rimsky-Korsakof consented to try his hand at musical journalism. Napravnik's "Citizens of Nijni" was to be staged at the Maryinsky Theatre, and as this conductor-composer was just then occupied in preparing for a performance of Cui's opera "William Ratcliff," the latter was particularly anxious to avoid expressing an opinion which he imagined must be unfavourable upon Napravnik's work. Rimsky-Korsakof's article upon the opera, coupled with a eulogistic notice of "William Ratcliff" which followed shortly after, resulted in creating a coolness between himself and Napravnik which was lifelong.*

There are many examples of collaborative music among the literature of the modern Russian School. The notion seems to have originated with a specimen of joint composition, with which our subject was now called upon to busy himself. Gedeonof, the Director of the Imperial Theatres, desired to mount a composite

* Both notices are to be found in the published volume of Rimsky-Korsakof's writings.

work in the form of an "opera-ballet," to be called "Mlada." The plot, derived from the chronicles of the Polabian Slavs, was to be in the hands of V. A. Krilof, and the four acts were to be set to music by Cui, Borodin, Moussorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakof. The production was conceived, however, on rather too generous a scale, and when the four composers had completed the greater part of their labours the enterprise was suddenly abandoned owing to want of funds. But its music, though shelved, was not altogether abandoned, and a considerable portion of it was made use of later in various ways by its respective composers.

Rimsky-Korsakof had entered into the undertaking with much zest, and had put on one side his work both on the orchestration of "The Stone Guest" and his own opera, "The Maid of Pskof." This he was now able to resume, and by the end of the summer of 1870 he had completed the former, had made considerable additions to the latter, and had found time also to write some new songs.

VIII.

The periodical evenings, interrupted by the death of Dargomijsky, had since that event been held either at the house of Mme Shestakof or at the Pourgolds'. A further death, that of Mme Pourgold, once more caused the gatherings to be suspended for a time. In the summer of 1871 the family moved into the country, but were sufficiently near to Petrograd to receive constant visits from Nadejda Nikolaevna's suitor. The

latter was again hard at work upon "The Maid of Pskof," and had completed a goodly portion of the orchestral score of his opera.

During the summer occurred an event which, as will be seen, was destined completely to alter the course of Rimsky-Korsakof's musical career. Fortified by the Circle's indifference to academical training, he had hitherto been content to rely almost entirely upon musical instinct. One can but marvel at his boldness in accepting the task of orchestrating "The Stone Guest," despite his want of experience in this department.

But when Azanchevsky, the newly appointed Director of the Petrograd Conservatoire, actually offered him a post as professor of composition and orchestration, and the conductorship of the orchestral class in that institution, he realized that his profound ignorance of theoretical matters could no longer be tolerated.

His own account of his feelings in regard to the acceptance of the post is highly amusing. He felt that to know nothing of counterpoint, little of the principles of harmony, to be ignorant of the very names of the intervals, to have but the sketchiest idea of instrumentation and no experience of conducting, might prove a little awkward for a professional musician. And he recognized that, as a professor of the subjects he found himself invited to teach, these gaps in his equipment might easily place him in a very invidious position.

He was encouraged to accept the post, however, not merely by the warm support of his immediate friends, nor by the flattering prospect of occupying a professorial chair, but because he felt that the studies that he would now be obliged to pursue, even if only for self-preservation's sake, would immensely facilitate his future work as a composer.

And so our professor of harmony, counterpoint and composition, began to take lessons in these subjects from the students in his class, who quite unconsciously enacted the rôle of pupil-teachers! It need hardly be mentioned that these studies were supplemented by others. But this at any rate was the beginning of those arduous researches that ended in his becoming so fluent in these subjects as to provoke an ill-disguised uneasiness among his fellow-members of the Circle. Erudition, they felt, was not the best kind of qualification for a pioneer.* The orchestral class appears to have been a success, and if he did not retain the conductorship very long it was not because he proved himself in any way incapable.

Moussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakof had by this time become great friends, and in the autumn of 1871 they resolved to share the same roof. The latter had been in the habit of dining at his brother's quarters, but owing to Voin Andreyevich's bad health he had been ordered to Italy, and his young brother, left to his own resources, chose this method of guarding himself against loneliness.

* From Cui he received an intimation that his resolve must inevitably lead to a parting of the ways.

The two composers seem to have arranged their work exceedingly well. Moussorgsky was occupied just then with "Boris Godounof," and "The Maid of Pskof" was in process of orchestration. But matters were so well adjusted that their partnership caused them no inconvenience. This proximity enabled them to make a free exchange of ideas, and their room became a meeting-place for the Circle.

But the arrangement was not of long duration. Intercourse, interrupted in the first place by Korsakof's journey to Italy, where his brother had died, and then by his formal engagement to Nadejda Pourgold, became less and less frequent. The prospective bridegroom spent every spare moment with his betrothed.

In January, 1872, "The Maid of Pskof" was ready for publication. It had first, however, to be submitted to the Censor, who took exception to certain passages savouring of republicanism, and also to the appearance of Ivan the Terrible on the stage. He sheltered himself behind a decree issued by Nicholas I., but considerably furnished an explanation to the effect that the spectacle of a Tsar bursting forth into song was not calculated to promote the dignity of monarchy! Through the interference of one of the composer's highly placed naval friends, the objection was finally waived, and the opera received the favourable consideration of the directorate of the Maryinsky Theatre.

But another claim had first to be satisfied, and in the following month the now fully orchestrated "Stone Guest" was mounted. The "cast" for the occasion

was beyond cavil; but the success of this extraordinary opera (which contained neither chorus nor ballet, and was dubbed by one critic "a recitative in three acts")—probably due to the excellence of its interpretation—was not long-lived, and "The Stone Guest" disappeared, after a few performances, from the repertory.

In the early summer of this notable year Rimsky-Korsakof, deserting his comrade, took a small room near to the country house in which his fiancée was living. On June 30th they inaugurated their long and happy married life, Moussorgsky officiating as best man. The honeymoon was spent in Switzerland and Northern Italy.

In the autumn the pair settled in Petrograd, the musical meetings were once more resumed, and preparations were made for staging "The Maid of Pskof." This took place in January, 1873. The interpretation was in good hands, the best singers of the time were engaged, and the part now associated with Shalyapin was rendered by the famous Petrof. The opera achieved a very considerable success, meeting, however, with the usual carping criticism from the ever-dissatisfied opposition.

Meanwhile things had not been going very well with the Circle as a collective institution. Balakiref, already under the sway of the religious mysticism that was eventually to render him almost a fanatic, was very rarely seen in musical society, and his whereabouts had become the subject of considerable speculation among his fellow-members of the "Invincible

Band." Mme Rimsky-Korsakof's sister had married,* and no longer attended the meetings, and the enthusiasm of some of their unofficial adherents had cooled. But Moussorgsky, busy with "Khovanshchina," Borodin, at work on "Prince Igor," and Stassof, remained faithful. Rimsky-Korsakof, occupied with the composition of a third symphony, was experiencing considerable difficulty owing to an anxiety to introduce therein a contrapuntal interest—a desire that it was not yet in his power to gratify "without tears."

Soon after the successful production of his opera, the fates smiled once more upon the composer. He was invited to fill the newly-created post of Inspector of Naval Bands, a billet that involved the entire supervision of musicians and of music associated with the Service throughout the Empire. This appointment, which he accepted, brought him a very welcome addition to his income. It was also productive of good results in the same way as his Conservatoire professorship. He resolved to acquire a thorough knowledge of the military band. Procuring a set of wind instruments, he set to work during the summer, spent as usual in the country, and after astonishing the natives to a considerable degree, he succeeded in obtaining a practical mastery as well as a fairly sound theoretical knowledge of them. Brought up as he was in a circle in which virtually nothing was known of such

* Alexandra Pourgold became the wife of Admiral Molas, who was in command of the warship *Petropavlovsk* when she was sunk by a Japanese mine.

things, it does not seem at all strange that at the very outset of his studies he should have proposed to himself the compilation of a textbook on the subject. Its subsequent outcome—the posthumously published *Treatise on Instrumentation*—is a work from which the present generation of musicians in Russia is profiting very greatly. In justification of his acceptance of the post, his *Memoirs* record that he found it necessary to exert a fairly severe discipline among the several foreign band-masters under his control.

IX.

In the following autumn Rimsky-Korsakof was much occupied with his new Inspectorship. He devoted a good deal of time to the scoring of works suitable for the military type of orchestra, and busied himself also with a general reorganization. One reform that afforded him no little satisfaction was the installation of native band-masters in positions hitherto invariably held by aliens, principally German. But he was not neglecting his primary vocation. Towards the end of the autumn it was proposed to give a concert in aid of a famine fund. Rimsky-Korsakof was called upon to conduct, and it was decided that his now completed third symphony should be performed. The concert, held in February, 1874, went off very happily in the artistic, though not in the financial, sense, and the conductor had every reason to be satisfied with his initial public experience with the baton.

But the symphony aroused no great enthusiasm among his friends—its contrapuntal substance, which had given so much trouble to the young professor, was not at all to their taste.

Another event of importance punctuated the course of this season. Just before Rimsky-Korsakof's first appearance as a conductor, the production of "Boris Godounof" took place on the Maryinsky stage, causing a great deal of excitement among the adherents of the modern Russian group, and indeed Moussorgsky was the hero of the hour.

The latter part of the season was spent in a tour of the Crimea. The naval inspector, having been required to report on the band at Nikolayef, availed himself of this opportunity to betake himself, his wife, and their little son, born in the previous summer, to the choicest spots of Southern Russia, and the trio visited such places of interest as Aloupka, Yalta, Sevastopol, and Bakhtchisarai, the Oriental music of the street-players in the last-named town furnishing the composer with some valuable impressions.

On their return he began his first essay in chamber-music, the string quartet in F. Once again he found himself the victim of that newly acquired knowledge of counterpoint, and the quartet proved somewhat dull. The increasing "learnedness" of his music continued to disturb his friends. They were sorely troubled by this disconcerting result of his studies. The offender, perceiving that his increasing knowledge of the musical sciences added greatly to his capacity

for enjoying the works of the great masters of the past, continued to persevere with his exercises in counterpoint and fugue. Palestrina was now for him an idol, Stassof an iconoclast.

Balakiref also upbraided him, but only by letter. His withdrawal from the musical world had had a disastrous effect upon the Free School; he had neglected to resign his directorship, which had thus become merely nominal. In the autumn of 1874 Rimsky-Korsakof was invited to take over this post, Balakiref having apparently been prevailed upon by the committee to retire. The new director took his duties very seriously, and soon infused some life into the affairs of the School. In the following March he conducted a "classical" concert, the first held in connection with the institution for three years, and once more aroused the indignation of his friends by his "retrogressive" programme. His fast-growing technical equipment afforded him, however, ample compensation for this unpleasant attitude adopted by them, and during the summer, spent at a country house on the Neva, he zealously continued his studies.

They soon began to bear good fruit, evidences of his prowess being provided in the shape of some choruses for female and mixed voices, piano fugues, and three small pieces for that instrument (op. 15). These "exercises" seem to have been a source of comfort to the Conservatoire authorities, who hoped that some disquieting rumours circulating as to the professor's want of training might thereby be hushed.

A conciliatory effect upon his friends was created by the second of two concerts given under Free School auspices, in which the programme was exclusively devoted to Russian music. Balakiref, who had lately reappeared in musical circles, was alone dissatisfied. He opined that to relegate Russian composers to a "native" programme might give an impression that Russian music was not of sufficient quality to emerge successfully from comparison with the works of the famous "Westerns."

Balakiref's return was of happy augury for his now established pupil. With him came one Filippof, a religious mystic, whose influence is held responsible for Balakiref's long abstention from musical pursuits. Filippof had collected a number of folk-songs, and at his invitation Rimsky-Korsakof set about harmonizing some forty of these and preparing them for publication. This work prompted him to make a collection of his own. Of the hundred specimens published a short time after, many are to be found as themes in his operas. Further, he was involved in Balakiref's undertaking to edit the scores of Glinka's two famous operas, in fulfilment of a promise made to the great man's sister. His consent to assist Balakiref in this caused severe inroads upon his working hours, but the task was a very profitable one, as it afforded him so excellent an opportunity of studying exhaustively the methods of the "father of Russian Opera." Notwithstanding a sudden influx of pupils, introduced by Balakiref, he undertook at this time the composition

of a string sextet for a competition organized by the Russian Musical Society. This and a quartet for piano and wind instruments were completed during his summer holiday.

In the autumn, whilst still at work upon the Glinka scores, he resolved to rewrite his own opera, "The Maid of Pskof," and to add to it a setting of the Prologue of Mey's drama, subsequently published under the separate title of "Boyarina Vera Sheloga." On this he worked for the greater part of two years.

Despite his many occupations, Rimsky-Korsakof did not neglect his duties as Inspector. He continued to arrange and compose pieces designed to elevate the taste of a public that preferred its music in the open air. He was a little dismayed, however, to discover that this public had a further preference that did not at all commend itself to him. His *al fresco* audiences were greatly interested in the performers, but paid the scantiest attention to the music.

His participation in "indoor" music brought compensations. During the latter end of 1876 and the early months of the following year he organized and conducted three concerts in connection with the Free School. At the first of these his Serbian Fantasia was played. The second was notable for a first performance of Borodin's now famous B minor symphony, and Balakiref's overture "Russia" figured in the third. Thanks to experience of this kind, he began to "feel his feet" as a conductor.

During the annual rustication, while working at the

revision of his first opera, the idea of writing a second presented itself to the composer. Having discussed the matter with his wife, he resolved to base the work upon Gogol's famous tale "A Night in May," a story that they had read together on the evening of their engagement. For the present, however, he did not propose to interrupt his labours on the revision of "The Maid of Pskof." And in the autumn, when, owing to the lapse of the Free School concerts through want of funds, some spare time offered itself, he conscientiously devoted it to the organizing of the inner life of that institution, joining the students in informal performances.

The School was supported mainly by voluntary subscriptions, and the general adequacy of these seems to have been due chiefly to the efforts of Balakiref, who was an indefatigable canvasser.

Balakiref still frequented the revived Circle meetings, but the younger members were much happier on the occasions when he failed to put in an appearance. They had attained to musical independence, and preferred that their individualities should remain unhampered by their former adviser's coercive methods. Stassof's boisterous expressions of encouragement were much more to their taste.

X.

The preliminary sketch of "A Night in May" being complete, the winter saw the composer hard at work upon his new opera. In this he was often assisted by

the counsels of Lyadof, formerly a pupil, now a colleague.

Lyadof, being the son of a celebrated operatic conductor, had received a liberal education in matters theatrical, and he was thus able to offer some valuable hints. But just as his first opera had been put on one side in order to afford leisure for a very curious joint composition ("Mlada"), so was the present work. In the spring of 1878 the second in what is now quite a long series of collaborative enterprises was mooted. This was the set of piano variations on what is known to us as the "chop-sticks" theme. The plan originated with Borodin, who with Cui, Korsakof, and Lyadof, put together a series of quite charming little pieces. Later on Liszt expressed his approval of these "Paraphrases" by writing an additional number.

An invitation to conduct some Russian concerts at the Paris Exhibition of 1878 threatened a further delay in the composition of "A Night in May." But after spending a good deal of time and trouble in arranging programmes, the composer found himself superseded by N. G. Rubinstein, the brother of the famous pianist. This, in view of his inexperience, he regarded as a blessing in disguise. At any rate it enabled him to resume work upon the opera, which began to make good headway and was almost complete at the conclusion of the summer vacation.

In December "A Night in May," having been approved by the Censor, was submitted to the operatic directorate, accepted on the recommendation of

Nappravnik, and in the spring was put into rehearsal. Taking advantage of the revival of the Free School series of concerts, the composer inserted some excerpts from the new opera in one of the four programmes of the scheme. He also included therein some of Borodin's music for "Prince Igor," the composition of which was proceeding somewhat fitfully. At a Moscow Philharmonic concert at which he was engaged to conduct, another sample of his operatic work, the overture to "The Maid of Pskof," served to introduce him to the musical public in the ancient capital. "Sadko" was also performed, and made a profound impression on the Muscovites.

His subsequent summer holiday brought forth a sketch for "The Tale" (op. 29), a fantastic orchestral work based on Pushkin's Prologue to "Russlan and Ludmilla," and a string quartet on Russian themes, afterwards rearranged as an orchestral Sinfonietta.

The rehearsals of "A Night in May" proved somewhat more of a drain on the composer's time than he had anticipated. But the vexatious, because quite unnecessary, delay did not deter him from making progress with his further operatic plans. Although deep in discussion regarding the scenic arrangement of "A Night in May," his mind was already busy with thoughts of another work. He was reading Ostrovsky's "Snow-Maiden."

Meanwhile the Free School concerts, the Conservatoire, and the Inspectorship claimed a good deal of attention. In respect of the first-named his deter-

mination to give prominence to contemporary Russian composers involved his bearing a further burden, for having undertaken to perform their works he found the greatest possible difficulty in obtaining them!

He had not only to run after the composers, but was obliged in some instances actually to help them copy out parts at the eleventh hour. As will have been gathered, Rimsky-Korsakof's industry was never confined to the mere carrying out of his many duties. To add to his embarrassments, at this time Balakiref continued to send him a number of new pupils. Among them came young Sasha Glazounof, whose mother had for some time been studying with him, and who quickly captured his master's esteem and affection.

At last, in January, 1880, "A Night in May" was produced with, on the whole, very happy results. Rimsky-Korsakof's friends seem to have been prepared for a somewhat pedagogic work, and were apparently unable to rid themselves of certain preconceived opinions. Their approval, at all events, was but lukewarm.

A circumstance arising out of a return visit to Moscow in the spring was instrumental in giving a fillip to his project for a new opera. Availing himself of his proximity to the home of the author of "The Snow-Maiden," he called upon Ostrovsky, and was given a cordial reception. Encouraged by the dramatist's blessing he applied himself with energy, and by the beginning of the summer he had already prepared a good deal of rough material for his opera.

His surroundings during the summer, spent at Stelyovo, could not have been better chosen. The beautiful scenery and the village life made just the kind of impression upon the composer needful to inspire him for the composition of such a work as "The Snow-Maiden." Apparently, when seating himself at his desk, he had but to think of the sights and sounds of his daily experience in this altogether delightful environment, and the music flowed forth. By the middle of August the musical sketch had been filled in, the orchestration was begun early in the autumn, and by the end of March, 1881, the whole opera was complete.

His *confrères* of the Circle, having heard nothing whatever of what their colleague had been doing, possibly imagined him once again deep in "musical science"; they were overcome with astonishment when invited to listen to "The Snow-Maiden." But they did not overwhelm the composer with eulogies of his work. Even Balakiref, who showed considerable pleasure, appears to have missed the beauty of the whole poetic conception, much to the chagrin of the poet!

The visits to Moscow having resulted in creating a favourable impression of the Petrograd composer, he received for the autumn of 1880 a third invitation. It seems not at all improbable that Tchaikovsky, who had made Rimsky-Korsakof's acquaintance on the occasion of some visits to the Circle meetings, may have exerted his powerful influence on

the latter's behalf; as critic on the staff of one of the papers, he lost no opportunity of praising his friend's work, and, as we shall see, there were reasons for supposing that Rimsky-Korsakof's popularity in Moscow might at some future time serve as a useful asset.

In connection with the Free School four concerts were announced for that season. Only one of them took place. On that occasion Moussorgsky's "The Destruction of Sennacherib" (after Byron)* was performed. About five weeks later Alexander II., the Liberator, was laid low by the bomb of an anarchist, and within three days of this Moussorgsky breathed his last—his constitution ruined by excesses.

XI.

Of these two tragic events the second, more than the first, was responsible for changes in the subsequent course of Rimsky-Korsakof's activities. The Free School concerts were of course abandoned, but the leisure this brought was soon accounted for. With Moussorgsky's demise it fell to his friend's lot to examine and edit for publication the mass of material left by the unfortunate composer. Here was work and to spare. And this, according to Rimsky-Korsakof, finally dictated his resignation from the directorship of the Free School, a post that had become more and more uncomfortable since Balakiref's return to the musical world. The latter's interference in School affairs—the cause of Rimsky-Korsakof's dissatisfaction

* For mixed Chorus and Orchestra.

—was given point by his immediate reacceptance of the directorship which he had been the first to hold. A contributory reason for Rimsky-Korsakof's decision was his anticipation that "The Snow-Maiden" might be accepted for performance at the Opera, and that, like "A Night in May," its rehearsals might demand a considerable sacrifice of time.

This anticipation proved correct. After a comparatively uneventful summer, the composer found himself called upon, in December, to attend the final preparations for the production of his opera, the preliminary rehearsals having then been in progress for a considerable time. "The Snow-Maiden" received its first performance in January, 1882.

Considering the number of "cuts" that had been made in the score, it does not seem strange that the critics should have found it wanting in dramatic interest; but the verdict given in respect of what has since been accepted and acclaimed as a veritable masterpiece—viz., that its composer was not at his best in opera—sounds a little odder than the ordinary mistaken criticism by which masterpieces are so often greeted.

Belonging to this period is the first public appearance of Rimsky-Korsakof's young pupil Glazounof. The astonishment called forth by the sight of a youth in schoolboy's uniform on the platform recalls his master's similar experience. Certain sceptics there were who did not conceal their belief that the "little Glinka," as the youth had been dubbed, owed his first symphony to a more experienced hand.

Glazounof's advent was instrumental in bringing a new figure into Petrograd musical life. With it began a widening of the sphere of the Circle's activities; it was soon to be reconstituted and to be presided over, until his death, by the newcomer, M. P. Belayef. The first meeting between Rimsky-Korsakof and the Russian musical Mæcenat took place at a concert held at the Pan-Russian Exhibition in Moscow, at which the former conducted Glazounof's first symphony. This acquaintance speedily ripened into friendship, and during this process the Circle, now consisting of Borodin, Stassof, Lyadof, Glazounof, Felix Blumenfeld—whom Rimsky-Korsakof had met while on a Crimean holiday in the summer of 1881—and Ippolitof-Ivanof, gradually came under the benign and highly beneficial influence of its new leader; it was not long before the venue of the meetings was changed and he became host.

The editing of Moussorgsky's works continued for some considerable time to occupy almost the whole of Rimsky-Korsakof's attention; the only creative work undertaken during this period was the preliminary sketch for a piano concerto and the setting of Pushkin's "Upas Tree," publication of which was delayed for many years.

XII.

An indirect result of the change from the *régime* of Alexander II. to that of his son was the reorganization of the institution known as the Imperial Chapel. In

this Rimsky-Korsakof took a large share of responsibility. The actual directorship was given to Balakiref, who chose his junior as chief assistant. The latter's first important, though by no means onerous, duty was to attend the ceremony of the coronation of the new Emperor at Moscow in May, 1883. With the rearrangement of the various classes he found plenty to occupy him. Apparently this administrative task and his other duties occupied the whole of his attention, for there is no record of any creative work at this time.

A relief of the pressure came early in 1884. Doubtless as another result of the change of régime, the long-held Inspectorship of Naval Bands came to an end; the post was abolished—a "reform" that did not meet with the deposed Inspector's approval, especially as the military inspectorship was retained.

Belayef's esteem for Glazounof's early compositions was such that he now brought forward a proposal to publish the full score of the first (E major) symphony. From this initial venture sprang the great organization with which Belayef's name has been so long and so honourably associated. Hitherto he had taken an active part in the control of the large timber concern left him by his father. He resolved at this juncture to sever his active connection therewith, and henceforth to devote his energies entirely to the welfare of native music. With the administration of the publishing house of Belayef, Rimsky-Korsakof was closely concerned. To him the foundation of the series of con-

certs endowed by Belayef for the furtherance of Russian music is directly due.

At this moment Rimsky-Korsakof received an invitation from Tchaikovsky to take up the vacant post of Director of the Moscow Conservatoire. It is a little curious that the honour paid him is not referred to in his Memoirs. It is not difficult to understand his non-acceptance. His duties at the Petrograd Conservatoire and the Imperial Chapel, and the conductorship of the newly established Russian Symphony Concerts—an appointment shared with his former pupil Duetsch—were supplemented by the further tie of his association with Belayef. In addition, there was the work on Moussorgsky's unfinished compositions.

This had already gone far towards completion. After a considerable amount of trouble, he had succeeded in suitably orchestrating "A Night on the Bare Mountain," which was performed at one of the Russian Symphony concerts in the autumn of 1886, and soon secured a wide popularity. But his altruistic labours were not yet over.

At an early hour on February 15th, 1887, he heard from Stassof of Borodin's sudden death at a party on the previous evening. Immediately after the funeral it was decided that Glazounof and he should undertake the completion of the manuscripts found at the lamented composer's house. Belayef held himself responsible for their ultimate publication. This work was begun at once, and occupied Rimsky-Korsakof for the greater part of the summer, spent on the banks

of Lake Nelai. During a break came the famous "Spanish Caprice."

By autumn he had prepared sufficient material for a concert devoted to Borodin's works, arranged in connection with the Russian Symphony series, which, owing to the indisposition of Duetsch, were all conducted by Rimsky-Korsakof. The "Spanish Caprice," also produced at these concerts, was apparently the "hit" of the season. This no doubt prompted the writing of further orchestral works. In the summer of 1888 both "Sheherazade" and the "Easter Overture" were composed, and they were performed under Rimsky-Korsakof's own conductorship during the ensuing concert season.

Still conscientiously pursuing the ideal of thorough musicianship, he seized the opportunity presented by a Wagner Season in Petrograd, which embraced a performance of the "Ring," of embarking on an exhaustive study of the great German's methods. For some time, therefore, he laid aside the pen of composition. But during his work upon the Borodin material, it fell to him to deal with the "Mlada" fragment, abandoned by its composer on the shelving of Gedeonof's ambitious project. The suggestion that "Mlada" might serve Rimsky-Korsakof as the subject of an opera-ballet came from Lyadof. By the spring of 1889 it had already taken shape, and at Christmas it was ready for performance.

The change in the Opera management—Vsevolojtsky had been in charge since the accession of Alexander III.

—had not been attended with any speeding-up of affairs. The staging of Borodin's "Prince Igor," which had been quickly got ready by Korsakof and Glazounof, was unaccountably delayed, and "Mlada" suffered the same fate. Despite its immediate acceptance it was not actually produced until October, 1892.

In the meantime the composer found other matters claiming his attention. Belayef called upon him to undertake the conductorship of two Russian concerts, to be held at the Paris Exhibition of 1889. The Russian visitors were entertained by the leading French musicians in a fashion that enabled them to forget the scantiness of the audiences. Owing to Belayef's dislike to any form of advertisement, even, it seems, to that of a perfectly legitimate kind, the concerts resulted in a heavy financial loss.

In the following spring Rimsky-Korsakof visited Brussels. Russian music had been introduced into Belgium through the efforts of the Countess Mercy-Argenteau some years previously—Cui and Borodin having been invited to Liège and the capital in 1886—and the Petrograd master met with a most cordial reception. Musicians came from all parts of Belgium to make his acquaintance, and he was shown every possible attention and much hospitality. The two Russian concerts held at La Monnaie were a complete success in every way.

At the end of the year he celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of his initial effort as composer. This was made the occasion by his friends for the holding of

a miniature festival in his honour. A concert devoted to his compositions was organized by Belayef, and the performance of the programme was punctuated by tributes of all kinds. In the evening the worthy composer entertained his friends at dinner.

XIII.

During the time that had elapsed since the completion of "Mlada," Rimsky-Korsakof had not been sufficiently settled to be able to undertake further contributions to the operatic stage. He had worked chiefly upon the Borodin material, and on a revision of all his own earlier compositions. Every work of his nonage, prior, that is, to the beginning of the studies which had so alarmed his colleagues of the Balakiref Circle, had now been subjected to a thorough overhauling. From this time on, during the last sixteen years of his life, he devoted himself almost exclusively to operatic composition. An opera per annum was for some little time his average output.

He had long been attracted by the subject of Gogol's "Christmas Eve Revels," but had not felt himself entitled to use it, since it formed the basis of Tchaikovsky's "Oxana's Caprice," a work for which the Petrograd composer had little esteem. On Tchaikovsky's death in the autumn of 1893 he considered himself at liberty to write a new setting.

The following summer was spent at Vechasha. Here the environment proved propitious; not only did the

new opera quickly take shape, but the composer, while engaged upon it, conceived the idea of a further work. The subject of this was "Sadko," and in this "opera-legend" he resolved to employ a certain amount of the thematic material from the symphonic poem of the same name.

Having resigned the conductorship of the Russian Symphony concerts and his Imperial Chapel appointment, he was able for a time to devote a considerable portion of his day to operatic composition; but owing to the resumption of the former duty for a season of four concerts, he was obliged to confine his attention to the one opera, and "Sadko" was put on one side until the completion of "Christmas Eve Revels" should be accomplished.

Towards October, 1894, he approached the Censor, only to be informed that the appearance of the figure of Catherine II. brought the opera under the ban of a general prohibition of royal *dramatis personæ*. As in the case of "The Maid of Pskof," the composer's influence was sufficient to enable him to obtain a suspension of this rule. But this modification of an Imperial decree had an unexpected outcome. At the final rehearsal, in November, 1895, it transpired that the management had put somewhat too liberal a construction upon the licence granted them; the royal character was made up so faithfully to resemble the "Northern Semiramis" that two indignant members of the reigning house present in the theatre made immediate representations to the authorities, and a

change was demanded as a condition of the production. It was too late to argue, and the Empress Catherine became a Most Serene Highness, of the sterner sex.

In the meantime "Sadko" was steadily progressing, and the composer, having again sought inspiration at Vechasha, met there his librettist Bielsky. This time, however, his work was not so rapid. Indisposition caused a serious interruption, and the completion of "Sadko" was delayed until after the following summer.

Rimsky-Korsakof was well accustomed to the vagaries of the Imperial Opera Directorate, but hitherto he had experienced little difficulty in prevailing upon them to accept his operas. On submitting "Sadko," however, he saw at once that there was an entire lack of enthusiasm on the part of the management; he resolved therefore to take his work elsewhere. An opportunity offered itself towards the end of 1897, when Mamontof, an artistic millionaire whose name is honourably associated with operatic enterprises, announced his willingness to produce "Sadko" at the Solodovnikof Theatre, Moscow. A rather faulty first performance took place in December, 1897. Under the same auspices the work appeared shortly afterwards in the capital, and met with great success.

By this time another operatic venture was already in course of preparation. The summer of 1897, spent at Smichkovo, was particularly fruitful and its product varied. The rarely-heard "Svitezyanka"* (a Cantata for soprano, tenor chorus, and orchestra), a string

* After Mickievicz.

quartet, a piano trio, and several songs were composed. But the most important item was "Mozart and Salieri," an essay in Dargomijskian opera, inspired by the "Stone Guest" and dedicated to the memory of its composer. This, like "Sadko," from which it differs so utterly, was entrusted to Mamontof, and was produced by him at Moscow in the autumn of 1898 and subsequently at Petrograd.

Another effort in the declamatory style also figured in Mamontof's scheme. "Boyarina Vera Sheloga," begun in the spring of 1898, may be considered either as a very short one-act operatic study, or as a Prologue to "The Maid of Pskof." Its literary substance forms a key to the dramatic relationship between Ivan the Terrible, Tokmakof, the Governor of Pskof, and his adopted daughter Olga, in the work of which it is the complement, or rather the Introduction. At its production the Prologue seems to have been somewhat overshadowed by the main opera, in which Shalyapin gave a particularly compelling performance as the terrible Tsar.

Rimsky-Korsakof was too gifted an artist to be content for long with the method of "The Stone Guest." His next opera was entirely melodic. The inspiring effect of the temporarily forsaken Vechasha neighbourhood was fresh in the composer's memory, and to this spot he accordingly returned in the summer of 1898, to seek in its well-remembered scenery the evocation of melody for "The Tsar's Bride." He was not disappointed. Vechasha exerted its former spell, and the creative faculty was stimulated to a degree

recalling his experience with the composition of "The Snow-Maiden." The orchestration was carried out in the autumn, and the opera was produced a year later by Mamontof.

Considering the number of Russian musical works that have been based on Pushkin literature, it is a little surprising that so determined a nationalist as Rimsky-Korsakof should have delayed so long in resorting to the folk-lore creations of the great national poet. Hitherto "Mozart and Salieri" was the only example of Pushkin material used by him in opera. In this the very nature of the subject precluded the employment of anything akin to "national" treatment. The choice of "The Tale of Tsar Saltan," one of Pushkin's best known folk-poems, as the basis of his tenth opera gave him full scope for such treatment. Here it was no longer possible to use the original text unaltered, as had been done with "Mozart and Salieri," and the libretto was entrusted to Bielsky. The tried combination of composer-librettist and the Vechasha background again proved successful, and "Tsar Saltan" was scored by the end of the year, notwithstanding the composition of "The Ballad of the Doom of Oleg" (for tenor, bass male chorus, and orchestra), undertaken as a diversion from the operatic work.

His dramatic output had so far been, with one exception, of the "national" order. The choice of the subject of Mey's "Servilia" was the outcome of a desire to be free once again from the restrictions imposed by adherence to the national programme.

But Rimsky-Korsakof, like Balakiref and Glinka, preferred to construe the term "nationalistic" in its most liberal sense; he was thus not deterred from devoting himself to the exploitation of foreign nationalism. But the task of reflecting in the score of "Servilia" the atmosphere of its libretto—which deals with Rome in the time of Nero—was not undertaken without a good deal of misgiving. He thought the matter out with characteristic thoroughness, and succeeded in formulating a thematic plan with which he appears to have been well satisfied.

His purely orchestral work was meanwhile earning him a solid Western reputation. Invited a second time to Brussels, he conducted there, in March, 1900, a Russian concert, in which the principal items were his own "Sheherazade," the symphonic "Sadko," and Glazounof's "Raymonda" suite.

On his return from Belgium he addressed himself to his new operatic subject. The summer of 1900 was spent abroad, in Germany and Switzerland, but he contrived nevertheless to make solid progress with "Servilia," and it was ready for publication in the following spring. The opera was not produced until two years later, when it was taken in hand by the Maryinsky directorate, now reconstituted. With the change of management had come an improvement in administration, and Rimsky-Korsakof, a little dissatisfied with the somewhat careless method of production obtaining among "private" opera companies, was highly pleased to learn that he could once more

count upon seeing his operas on the Imperial stage. "Sadko" now came into its own. Meanwhile "Saltan," which had been promised to the Mamontof concern, had been presented in Moscow (in October, 1900).

In December of that year the composer, by this time feeling something of a veteran, found himself plunged into a series of celebrations in honour of the thirty-fifth anniversary of the production of his first symphony. Returning from a visit to Moscow, arranged in connection with these festivities, he was dismayed to learn that a further succession of concerts, banquets, addresses and the rest, with which he had already been surfeited in Moscow, awaited him. In his Memoirs he gives the impression that this "jubilee" was one of the most unpleasant episodes in his career!

There was little room in his mind for such futilities. Three new operatic themes were being considered. The first was to treat of Polish life in the time of Sigismund III. and Boris Godounof; its libretto, undertaken by Tioumenef, was to be romantic and non-political. The second was "The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitej and the Maiden Fevronia," based on "The Chronicles of Kitej," which appear in Bezsonof's edition of Kirievsky's Song Collection, and which had for some time been the subject of conversations between the composer and Bielsky. E. M. Petrovsky, of the *Russian Musical Gazette*, had suggested the third, which was to consist of episodes from Russian folk-lore with "Kashchei" as the central figure.

Of these the subject which most attracted the composer was that of "Kashchei," and on this Rimsky-

Korsakof was engaged at Krapachouka during the summer of 1901, and the ensuing autumn.

The year 1902 was devoted partly to the composition of the Polish "Pan Voyevoda," and to the revision of his edition of "The Stone Guest," the orchestration of which he regarded as being much below the standard of his present powers. About two months of this year's holidays were spent in Heidelberg, where the composer made the acquaintance of young Igor Stravinsky, who afterwards became his pupil.

In October "Servilia" was produced at the Maryinsky Theatre, but, failing to attract much attention, was withdrawn after very few performances. In the same month "Kashchei" received its first performance at the Solodovnikof Theatre, and the newer work created a much more favourable impression, as might have been expected from the nature of its subject.

Towards the end of December, 1903, the Belayef Circle, and indeed the whole of Russian musical society, sustained a severe loss through the death, after an operation, of the altruistic publisher. Among the provisions of his will was the appointment of three trustees to administer the various funds endowed by this generous patron of music. These were Rimsky-Korsakof, Glazounof, and Lyadof. The first-named composed a small orchestral Prelude "At the Grave," which was dedicated to Belayef's memory and was performed at the first of that season's Russian Symphony concerts, the series that owed its existence to the deceased benefactor.

The composition of the penultimate opera, long

planned and begun in the summer of 1903 at Krapachouka, was already far advanced when Rimsky-Korsakof reached his country quarters at "our familiar and beloved Vechasha" in 1904. The production of his "Servilia" by the Solodovnikof management (no longer in the hands of Mamontof), which had followed the Petrograd presentation, having fallen somewhat below the standard required by the composer, it was decided to reserve the staging of "Kitej" until such time as it should be requisitioned by the Imperial directorate. The anxiously awaited invitation did not arrive until towards the close of 1906. Owing to its semi-religious subject-matter, the libretto had met with some opposition on the part of the Censor. The composer was the more grieved since, although unorthodox in his opinions, he was a deeply religious man, and believed that the stage might be made a powerful instrument for the spiritual elevation of the community.

It seems strange that the permission eventually granted did not foreshadow a more enlightened attitude towards "Parsifal"—a work often compared with "Kitej"—which was decisively banned when, on the expiration of its copyright, its production in Russia was mooted. The immense success achieved by Rimsky-Korsakof's opera at its first performance on February 7th, 1907, was an ample repayment for the delay. Unfortunately, owing to the expense entailed by its production, "Kitej" could not long be retained in the bill, and it was not revived until nearly four years later.

XIV.

The last years of Rimsky-Korsakof's life brought him troubles and disappointments that contributed to the undermining of his health. Towards the close of 1904, during the political unrest arising out of public dissatisfaction with the conduct of the Russo-Japanese war, the students of the University began an agitation in which the Conservatoire pupils speedily joined. The police were summoned, the Conservatoire closed, and Rimsky-Korsakof was called upon to vacate the Directorship—a command intended as a reproof for having written to a newspaper explaining that, far from instigating the students' agitation, he had actually endeavoured to calm them. This abuse of authority, however, was followed by protests from many parts of the Empire; the students organized in honour of their late Chief a performance of "Kashchei," to be followed by a concert (March, 1905). In the interval, however, such an uproar occurred that the police not only refused to allow the concert to be proceeded with, but placed an embargo upon Rimsky-Korsakof's compositions.

This crisis seems to have thoroughly upset the composer, and even a summer at Vechasha did not secure a return of the peace of mind which he naturally found an indispensable condition of creative work. He occupied himself mainly, therefore, in compiling examples for the illustration of his *Treatise on Orches-*

tration. By the autumn the political atmosphere had become a little less troubled. The Conservatoire was reopened, Glazounof was appointed Director, and the committee re-engaged the deposed Principal in a professorial capacity.

In his Memoirs, which close with an entry made at Garda in August, 1906, Rimsky-Korsakof, while recording discussions with Bielsky in the early part of that year regarding the material for a further opera, makes no mention of "The Golden Cockerel," although he refers to "Stenka Razin" (the subject of Glazounof's early orchestral poem) and to a Byronian tragedy (apparently "Heaven and Earth"), sketches for both of which operas were found among his papers. "The Golden Cockerel" seems to have been begun very soon after this final entry was made.

In the spring of 1907 Rimsky-Korsakof attended, in the capacity of conductor, the magnificent Russian musical festival organized in Paris by Messrs. Ossovsky and Calvocoressi, and was admitted a corresponding member of the French Academy.* On his return to Petrograd the composer, in a letter to Zimin, the controlling spirit in a "private" operatic enterprise, wrote that "The Golden Cockerel" was virtually finished, but that since the necessary process of revision

* During this visit Rimsky-Korsakof renewed his acquaintance with Skryabin, who had just returned from his American tour. It is recorded that the two composers entered into a long and animated discussion, in which they were joined by the somewhat sceptical Rakhmaninof, respecting "key-colour."

might take as long as the actual composition, it would hardly be advisable to consider its production during the approaching season. On receiving word of its readiness Zimin at once plunged into preparations for its performance. He had counted without the Censor. The thinly veiled satire of "The Golden Cockerel" gave offence in high quarters, and despite Zimin's representations the prohibition held good until March, 1909, when the Censor's ban was removed, subject to certain modifications in the text. The first performance eventually took place on September 24th, 1909, at Zimin's Theatre in Moscow, the Petrograd production following in January, 1910.

In the opinion of Glazounof, expressed in an obituary notice of the composer, this prohibition undoubtedly hastened his death; his disciple adds that the refusal of the French Society of Composers to admit him to membership was a contributory cause of his decline.

His widow, in the Preface to his Memoirs, states that by the time his last opera was complete the malady from which he was suffering had made considerable inroads on his constitution. Asthma supervened in April, 1908, and shortly after he left Petrograd for his country property, the manor-house at Lioubensk, where, at two o'clock on the morning of June 8th, the great national composer succumbed to an attack of angina pectoris.

In addition to the works already mentioned there were found after his death a revised edition of Moussorgsky's fragment "The Matchmaker," which he

had proposed to orchestrate; sketches for an opera on the subject of "The Barber of Bagdad;" and the Manual of Instrumentation, to which the finishing touches had been put a few hours before the final attack, and which has since been issued under the editorship of his son-in-law, M. Steinberg.

PART II

RIMSKY-KORSAKOF AS OPERATIC COMPOSER*

I.

IN the present volume it will not be possible to give more than a brief survey of Rimsky-Korsakof's operatic activity and output. The reader who has perused the foregoing narrative of the composer's life and work will doubtless have gathered that the literary subject-matter alone of these fifteen operas would provide material for quite a lengthy tome, and he is assured that their musical content is at least deserving of an equally extended treatment. For the present occasion it must needs suffice to pass in review the general characteristics of the wonderful operatic treasury left by Rimsky-Korsakof to the world.

Without some knowledge of his forerunners it is impossible to appreciate the full significance of his works. They may be said to derive from three sources.

Glinka's legacy to the theatre consists of two epoch-making works. The first, "A Life for the Tsar," is historical, being founded on an episode which is supposed to have occurred at the time of the inauguration of the Romanof dynasty. The second, "Russlan and Ludmilla," takes for its text the substance of

* See operatic synopses, p. 111.

Pushkin's early poem of that name, and is fantastic in character. "A Life for the Tsar" gave its composer an opportunity of introducing folk-song and melody of a national character; in "Russlan and Ludmilla" Glinka became, as it were, a musical imperialist, and drew material from a variety of territorial sources, from Finland on the one hand, from Turkey and Persia on the other.

These two operas have had an influence upon subsequent Russian music that it would be difficult to over-estimate. The output of Rimsky-Korsakof, a fairly prolific operatic composer, affords excellent material for the tracing of Glinka's influence upon the greatest Russian composers of modern times.

But ere proceeding with our analysis, it is necessary to take into account a third influence, that of Dargomijsky, Glinka's immediate successor. This composer, it will be remembered, wrote two important operas. "Russalka" possesses the elements of folklore and fantasy; in addition it is to be considered as an attempt to break away from the Italian tradition. Dargomijsky desired to establish a closer relation between the vocal music of an opera and its text, holding that the intrinsic beauty of a melody should not be regarded as an end in itself, but that the melody should have a character in keeping with the sentiment of the words to which it is sung. In this particular "Russalka" was but an attempt. In "The Stone Guest"—the work which became the "Invincible Band's" model—he dispensed with melody and con-

fined the vocal line of the opera within the limits of a melodic recitative. This was not the only measure adopted to bring about reform. Dargomijsky declined to avail himself of the various licences hitherto accorded the operatic composer. He paid particular attention to the question of dramatic realism, an example of which is to be seen in the absence of a chorus from "The Stone Guest"; in the play on which the opera is based there was no "crowd," and thus a chorus, in Dargomijsky's opinion, could not be legitimately introduced.

It was not long before the brotherhood of reformers discovered that if, as they proposed, subjects of national interest, such as "A Life for the Tsar," and more particularly "Russlan and Ludmilla," were to be used as the basis of Russian opera, it would be impossible rigidly to follow the path indicated by "The Stone Guest," and the records of Russian operatic composition, covering the thirty years following their tacit agreement as to a need for compromise in the matter, contain less than half a dozen examples of this "legitimate" type of opera. Among the dramatic works of the "Five" there are only three examples. Borodin altogether repudiated the Dargomijskian principle of "melo-declamation." Cui interpreted the code—of which he was the strongest advocate—with considerable elasticity, and Moussorgsky wrote only one work in which he strictly observed the principles, though, in "Boris Godounof" and "Khovanshchina," he effected a compromise

which in itself constitutes an important contribution to the effort towards an emancipation of opera from the noxious Italian tradition.

The effect upon the operatic work of Rimsky-Korsakof of these proposed reforms was not immediate. In his first essay, "The Maid of Pskof," much of the solo-vocal music is in the recitativo manner, but the opera cannot for a moment be considered as following the precept of the "gospel," since it contains a duet and other "ensemble" numbers which are an infraction of the Dargomijskian principle. Rimsky-Korsakof is not to be regarded as having definitely subscribed to that doctrine—later in life he spoke somewhat disrespectfully of what he characterized as an over-strict regard for the dramatic verities—but as having recognized, through association with this revolt against the past, that the future must be spent in searching for, if not in attaining, the ideal operatic structure.

II.

It will be necessary, then, in reviewing Rimsky-Korsakof's operas, to seek for evidences of Glinka's influence in the direction of literary material and poetic content, and at the same time to take note of the remarkable variation of style and structure to be discovered in the material of his fifteen dramatic works.

As has been indicated, the Glinkist tradition embraces the use of historical, folk-lore, and fantastic

material, and at the same time seeks to enlarge the territory from which this may be derived by drawing upon "all the Russias." The Oriental element in Rimsky-Korsakof's music, operatic, instrumental, and vocal, is a salient characteristic.

On historical subjects, or subjects pertaining more or less closely to history, Rimsky-Korsakof wrote three operas: "The Maid of Pskof" and "The Tsar's Bride," in both of which figures the Tsar Ivan the Terrible, and "Servilia," the last-named dealing with ancient Roman life. "Boyarina Vera Sheloga" is, properly speaking, a Prologue to "The Maid of Pskof," and is thus reckoned as forming part and parcel of its plot.

But Rimsky-Korsakof, an ardent nationalist, taking his cue from Glinka, has shown what abundant material other than that of purely historical interest there lies at the disposal of the Russian operatic composer who is desirous of investing his music-dramas with an atmosphere of nationalism. The influence of Glinka's "Russlan and Ludmilla" is clearly present in the literary substance of "The Tale of Tsar Saltan." In both instances the original text was that of Pushkin, and both stories are supposed to be told by the chained cat that circled round an oak-tree, telling a tale when turning to the left and singing a song when going in the other direction. The Prologue of the one is the cat's Introduction, which forms the programmatic scheme of Rimsky-Korsakof's orchestral fantasia, "The Tale;" while the *envoi* of "Tsar Saltan" is uttered by the same whiskered mouth. "Kashchei, the

Immortal " and " Mlada," in which that terrible ogre again appears, are obviously inspired by the Glinkist example, while " The Golden Cockerel," also after Pushkin, in its Oriental aspect at least, has certain features in common with " Russlan." With one exception, namely, " Mozart and Salieri," all the remaining operas of Rimsky-Korsakof contain in some degree the fantastic element that was first introduced into Russian Opera in Glinka's second work. " A Night in May " and " Christmas Eve Revels," like Mousorgsky's " Sorochinsk Fair," are dramatized versions of tales from a famous series by Gogol. In the first, happiness is bestowed upon the hero through the benevolent intervention of a grateful water-nymph, the " russalka " of Slavonic legend. In this plot the Devil is regarded by some of the characters as being not the unlikeliest visitor to their village; but in " Christmas Eve Revels " he is a prominent figure, and his theft of the moon and stars—an act frequently associated with his Satanic Majesty in northern legendary lore—is the cause of a deal of mischief.

The worship of pagan gods, which is a feature of these two operas and of the opera-ballet " Mlada," appears again in " The Snow-Maiden "—in which the advent of spring receives a poetic handling not excelled in any other of the composer's operas—and once more in " The Legend of Kitej," the work of Rimsky-Korsakof's last period, which shows in its literary aspect the influence of " Parsifal." A pantheist by conviction, Rimsky-Korsakof delighted in dwelling

upon the beauty of natural phenomena and in calling attention, by means of his art, to the old-time devotional practices that survive in the ceremonial dances and games of the Russian peasant.

His study of such works as Afanasief's "The Slavonian Poetic Ideas of Nature" contributed not a little to the supernatural element in "Christmas Eve Revels"; and "The Snow-Maiden" is inspired by the belief that there could be no finer manifestation of religious feeling than the worship of Yarilo, the sun-god—a deity who makes an appearance both in that opera and in "Mlada."

The "opera-legend" "Sadko" comes under a distinct heading. Founded on the Novgorodian Cycle it is, like Borodin's "Prince Igor," in the nature of an epic. Its literary material is of two kinds, the real and the fantastic, and in scenes where the latter atmosphere prevails, such as the procession of sea-marvels in the Sea-King's domain, one finds a suggestion of the pantheistic sentiments of the composer.

Into the one opera that has not yet had mention the supernatural enters only to a very small extent. Dorosha, a sorcerer, an unimportant character in "Pan Voyevoda," which deals with Polish life in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, produces a bowl in which the act of divination by water is performed.

III.

When a comparison is made between the historical operas of Rimsky-Korsakof and those in which he was able to introduce the element of fantasy, it is quickly seen how gravely the composer was handicapped in treating "real" subjects. He had so great a genius for descriptive writing that a text such as that of "The Maid of Pskof" (with "Vera Sheloga"), "The Tsar's Bride," or "Servilia," places him at a serious disadvantage. His power of describing fantastic figures and of revealing their nature by means of orchestral devices is an exceedingly important item among the component qualities of his nationalism. One observes that wherever there is scope in the text for fantastic description, the orchestra is at once given a much more important rôle. There is already a beginning in the first act of his second opera, "A Night in May," when, in Levko's narration of the legend of the oppressed step-daughter, the orchestra paints the picture of her act of self-destruction; this orchestral episode contains the germ of the music which in the third act describes the unfortunate maiden, turned water-nymph and surrounded by her attendant "russalki," who disport themselves in choral games and dances.

It is a curious coincidence that the perusal of "The Snow-Maiden" should have brought Rimsky-Korsakof to the definite realization that the treatment of "real life" was not calculated to afford him full scope for

his descriptive powers, for it was in this dramatic study of Nature that Ostrovsky had signalized his departure from the consideration of the purely mundane. The scene of the enchanted forest (Act III), with its Wood Spirit, who transforms himself into a tree-stump having two glowworms for eyes, and the instantaneous growths that prevent the flight of the terrified Mizguir, is set to music which, but for the composer's emancipation from the bondage of "life" subjects imposed upon him by the decreed principles, might never have been written. It had become quite evident to him that, while the historical subject afforded greater scope for dramatic action, he could obtain ample compensation for the sacrifice when dealing with material such as that of "The Snow-Maiden."

His subsequent operatic output provides many examples of the orchestral reflection of fantastic scenes: the dance of stars and the procession of comets in "Christmas Eve Revels" (Act III), the scene on Mount Triglaf in "Mlada," the entertainment offered Sadko in the submarine palace of the Sea-King and the transformation of his daughter into the river Volkhof, the symphonic introduction to the second act and the final scene of "Tsar Saltan," which describe the wonders of the magic island of Buyan, the music which precedes the chorus of Snow Spirits in "Kashchei," the bird songs in the scene of the enchanted forest in "Kitej": all testify to Rimsky-Korsakof's power of applying his wonderful imaginative faculty

in the use of the individual instrument and of the collective orchestra.

Rimsky-Korsakof's recognition of the survival of many pagan customs in the ceremonial of popular dances and games has already been noted. As might have been anticipated, there is no neglect of this material in his operas; he employs folk-lore substance as the basis of a number of episodic songs and dances, and obtains thereby many splendid scenic and musical effects. His profound knowledge of and delight in the subject of folk-legend, and the artistic fashion in which he wields that knowledge, are responsible for the many decorative scenes which adorn not only the fantastic but the historical operas. In the first act of "The Maid of Pskof" there is a reference, in the nurse's song, to the whistling dragon Tugarin, a monster who bears some resemblance to the "deathless" Kashchei; "A Night in May" opens with a representation of the choral game "The Sowing of the Millet," in which occurs an invocation to Lado, the god of spring and of love; of this there is a further specimen in "The Snow-Maiden"; in the second act of "Mlada" there is a Circling Dance or Kolo, from which the Russian peasants derive their Khorovodes—in this Kolo is mentioned the god Koupala, the prototype of Yarilo the sun-god; in "The Tsar's Bride" is a song and dance, "The Hops," an old-time autumn ceremonial. The Trepaks and Gopaks in "The Snow-Maiden," "A Night in May," "Kitej," and "Kashchei," and the Lithuanian dance in "Mlada," go to prove that

Rimsky-Korsakof was alive to the advantages of national and local colour.

Owing to his copious employment of folk-song, he has been sometimes unjustly accused of a poverty of melodic invention. But, as some of the Russian critics have good reason to know, it is never safe to speak without the book in this matter, for Rimsky-Korsakof, like Glinka and Moussorgsky, became possessed, by an unconscious process, of the power of writing in the folk manner.

When dealing in genuine folk-songs, he employs them in more than one fashion. There are already specimens of complete songs to be found in the pages of his early operas, "The Maid of Pskof" and "A Night in May"; but in "The Snow-Maiden," in addition to such tunes as that of the birds' dance, the Carnival, the "Millet" chorus and others, he has used certain suitable fragments as a means of characterization. The very popular song of *Lel* (the third given to this character) is, however, original.*

Several genuine and identifiable folk-melodies appear in "Tsar Saltan," one of them being the tune to which the composer's children were sung to sleep by an old

* An instance of the composer's scrupulous regard for appropriateness has recently come to light as the result of a comparison of Ostrovsky's original text of this number, (which, although written in a metre foreign to folk-song, was set without alteration by Tchaikovsky,) and the paraphrased version, made by Rimsky-Korsakof, in order that the music might be given the true folk character.

nurse; in "Kitej" the tune of the bear's dance in the second act, the accompaniment of Poyarok's oration in the third, and the chorus of encamped Tatars, are all to be recognized as quotations from Rimsky-Korsakof's own folk-song collection; the chorus of Mendicant Friars in the second act is from the collection of Filippof, which Rimsky-Korsakof harmonized and edited.

IV.

Rimsky-Korsakof's partiality for the folk-melody was strengthened by a fondness for modal music, in most cases the basis of these tunes. Several instances of modal writing occur in "The Snow-Maiden"; among them may be mentioned Lel's first song, the Heralds' proclamation, and the hymn of the Berendeys; others may be seen in the "Millet" chorus of "A Night in May" and in the dance of Mænads in the second act of "Servilia" (Phrygian); while in "Kitej," although not as rich in this respect as one might anticipate from the nature of the subject, there are three prominent themes in the Æolian mode, and one in the Phrygian, associated with the inhabitants of the temporarily invisible city.

Of Oriental colour, bequeathed to the Russian School by Glinka, there is an abundance both in the instrumental and operatic compositions of Rimsky-Korsakof. Besides the well-known "Hindoo Merchant's song" in "Sadko," there is a somewhat similar

XIV.

The last years of Rimsky-Korsakof's life brought him troubles and disappointments that contributed to the undermining of his health. Towards the close of 1904, during the political unrest arising out of public dissatisfaction with the conduct of the Russo-Japanese war, the students of the University began an agitation in which the Conservatoire pupils speedily joined. The police were summoned, the Conservatoire closed, and Rimsky-Korsakof was called upon to vacate the Directorship—a command intended as a reproof for having written to a newspaper explaining that, far from instigating the students' agitation, he had actually endeavoured to calm them. This abuse of authority, however, was followed by protests from many parts of the Empire; the students organized in honour of their late Chief a performance of "Kashchei," to be followed by a concert (March, 1905). In the interval, however, such an uproar occurred that the police not only refused to allow the concert to be proceeded with, but placed an embargo upon Rimsky-Korsakof's compositions.

This crisis seems to have thoroughly upset the composer, and even a summer at Vechasha did not secure a return of the peace of mind which he naturally found an indispensable condition of creative work. He occupied himself mainly, therefore, in compiling examples for the illustration of his Treatise on Orches-

tration. By the autumn the political atmosphere had become a little less troubled. The Conservatoire was reopened, Glazounof was appointed Director, and the committee re-engaged the deposed Principal in a professorial capacity.

In his Memoirs, which close with an entry made at Garda in August, 1906, Rimsky-Korsakof, while recording discussions with Bielsky in the early part of that year regarding the material for a further opera, makes no mention of "The Golden Cockerel," although he refers to "Stenka Razin" (the subject of Glazounof's early orchestral poem) and to a Byronian tragedy (apparently "Heaven and Earth"), sketches for both of which operas were found among his papers. "The Golden Cockerel" seems to have been begun very soon after this final entry was made.

In the spring of 1907 Rimsky-Korsakof attended, in the capacity of conductor, the magnificent Russian musical festival organized in Paris by Messrs. Ossovsky and Calvocoressi, and was admitted a corresponding member of the French Academy.* On his return to Petrograd the composer, in a letter to Zimin, the controlling spirit in a "private" operatic enterprise, wrote that "The Golden Cockerel" was virtually finished, but that since the necessary process of revision

* During this visit Rimsky-Korsakof renewed his acquaintance with Skryabin, who had just returned from his American tour. It is recorded that the two composers entered into a long and animated discussion, in which they were joined by the somewhat sceptical Rakhmaninof, respecting "key-colour."

might take as long as the actual composition, it would hardly be advisable to consider its production during the approaching season. On receiving word of its readiness Zimin at once plunged into preparations for its performance. He had counted without the Censor. The thinly veiled satire of "The Golden Cockerel" gave offence in high quarters, and despite Zimin's representations the prohibition held good until March, 1909, when the Censor's ban was removed, subject to certain modifications in the text. The first performance eventually took place on September 24th, 1909, at Zimin's Theatre in Moscow, the Petrograd production following in January, 1910.

In the opinion of Glazounof, expressed in an obituary notice of the composer, this prohibition undoubtedly hastened his death; his disciple adds that the refusal of the French Society of Composers to admit him to membership was a contributory cause of his decline.

His widow, in the Preface to his Memoirs, states that by the time his last opera was complete the malady from which he was suffering had made considerable inroads on his constitution. Asthma supervened in April, 1908, and shortly after he left Petrograd for his country property, the manor-house at Lioubensk, where, at two o'clock on the morning of June 8th, the great national composer succumbed to an attack of angina pectoris.

In addition to the works already mentioned there were found after his death a revised edition of Mousorgsky's fragment "The Matchmaker," which he

had proposed to orchestrate; sketches for an opera on the subject of "The Barber of Bagdad;" and the Manual of Instrumentation, to which the finishing touches had been put a few hours before the final attack, and which has since been issued under the editorship of his son-in-law, M. Steinberg.

PART II

RIMSKY-KORSAKOF AS OPERATIC COMPOSER*

I.

IN the present volume it will not be possible to give more than a brief survey of Rimsky-Korsakof's operatic activity and output. The reader who has perused the foregoing narrative of the composer's life and work will doubtless have gathered that the literary subject-matter alone of these fifteen operas would provide material for quite a lengthy tome, and he is assured that their musical content is at least deserving of an equally extended treatment. For the present occasion it must needs suffice to pass in review the general characteristics of the wonderful operatic treasury left by Rimsky-Korsakof to the world.

Without some knowledge of his forerunners it is impossible to appreciate the full significance of his works. They may be said to derive from three sources.

Glinka's legacy to the theatre consists of two epoch-making works. The first, "A Life for the Tsar," is historical, being founded on an episode which is supposed to have occurred at the time of the inauguration of the Romanof dynasty. The second, "Russlan and Ludmilla," takes for its text the substance of

* See operatic synopses, p. 111.

Pushkin's early poem of that name, and is fantastic in character. "A Life for the Tsar" gave its composer an opportunity of introducing folk-song and melody of a national character; in "Russlan and Ludmilla" Glinka became, as it were, a musical imperialist, and drew material from a variety of territorial sources, from Finland on the one hand, from Turkey and Persia on the other.

These two operas have had an influence upon subsequent Russian music that it would be difficult to over-estimate. The output of Rimsky-Korsakof, a fairly prolific operatic composer, affords excellent material for the tracing of Glinka's influence upon the greatest Russian composers of modern times.

But ere proceeding with our analysis, it is necessary to take into account a third influence, that of Dargomijsky, Glinka's immediate successor. This composer, it will be remembered, wrote two important operas. "Russalka" possesses the elements of folklore and fantasy; in addition it is to be considered as an attempt to break away from the Italian tradition. Dargomijsky desired to establish a closer relation between the vocal music of an opera and its text, holding that the intrinsic beauty of a melody should not be regarded as an end in itself, but that the melody should have a character in keeping with the sentiment of the words to which it is sung. In this particular "Russalka" was but an attempt. In "The Stone Guest"—the work which became the "Invincible Band's" model—he dispensed with melody and con-

finer the vocal line of the opera within the limits of a melodic recitative. This was not the only measure adopted to bring about reform. Dargomijsky declined to avail himself of the various licences hitherto accorded the operatic composer. He paid particular attention to the question of dramatic realism, an example of which is to be seen in the absence of a chorus from "The Stone Guest"; in the play on which the opera is based there was no "crowd," and thus a chorus, in Dargomijsky's opinion, could not be legitimately introduced.

It was not long before the brotherhood of reformers discovered that if, as they proposed, subjects of national interest, such as "A Life for the Tsar," and more particularly "Russlan and Ludmilla," were to be used as the basis of Russian opera, it would be impossible rigidly to follow the path indicated by "The Stone Guest," and the records of Russian operatic composition, covering the thirty years following their tacit agreement as to a need for compromise in the matter, contain less than half a dozen examples of this "legitimate" type of opera. Among the dramatic works of the "Five" there are only three examples. Borodin altogether repudiated the Dargomijskian principle of "melo-declamation." Cui interpreted the code—of which he was the strongest advocate—with considerable elasticity, and Moussorgsky wrote only one work in which he strictly observed the principles, though, in "Boris Godounof" and "Khovanshchina," he effected a compromise

which in itself constitutes an important contribution to the effort towards an emancipation of opera from the noxious Italian tradition.

The effect upon the operatic work of Rimsky-Korsakof of these proposed reforms was not immediate. In his first essay, "The Maid of Pskof," much of the solo-vocal music is in the recitativo manner, but the opera cannot for a moment be considered as following the precept of the "gospel," since it contains a duet and other "ensemble" numbers which are an infraction of the Dargomijskian principle. Rimsky-Korsakof is not to be regarded as having definitely subscribed to that doctrine—later in life he spoke somewhat disrespectfully of what he characterized as an over-strict regard for the dramatic verities—but as having recognized, through association with this revolt against the past, that the future must be spent in searching for, if not in attaining, the ideal operatic structure.

II.

It will be necessary, then, in reviewing Rimsky-Korsakof's operas, to seek for evidences of Glinka's influence in the direction of literary material and poetic content, and at the same time to take note of the remarkable variation of style and structure to be discovered in the material of his fifteen dramatic works.

As has been indicated, the Glinkist tradition embraces the use of historical, folk-lore, and fantastic

material, and at the same time seeks to enlarge the territory from which this may be derived by drawing upon "all the Russias." The Oriental element in Rimsky-Korsakof's music, operatic, instrumental, and vocal, is a salient characteristic.

On historical subjects, or subjects pertaining more or less closely to history, Rimsky-Korsakof wrote three operas: "The Maid of Pskof" and "The Tsar's Bride," in both of which figures the Tsar Ivan the Terrible, and "Servilia," the last-named dealing with ancient Roman life. "Boyarina Vera Sheloga" is, properly speaking, a Prologue to "The Maid of Pskof," and is thus reckoned as forming part and parcel of its plot.

But Rimsky-Korsakof, an ardent nationalist, taking his cue from Glinka, has shown what abundant material other than that of purely historical interest there lies at the disposal of the Russian operatic composer who is desirous of investing his music-dramas with an atmosphere of nationalism. The influence of Glinka's "Russlan and Ludmilla" is clearly present in the literary substance of "The Tale of Tsar Saltan." In both instances the original text was that of Pushkin, and both stories are supposed to be told by the chained cat that circled round an oak-tree, telling a tale when turning to the left and singing a song when going in the other direction. The Prologue of the one is the cat's Introduction, which forms the programmatic scheme of Rimsky-Korsakof's orchestral fantasia, "The Tale;" while the *envoi* of "Tsar Saltan" is uttered by the same whiskered mouth. "Kashchei, the

Immortal " and " Mlada," in which that terrible ogre again appears, are obviously inspired by the Glinkist example, while " The Golden Cockerel," also after Pushkin, in its Oriental aspect at least, has certain features in common with " Russlan." With one exception, namely, " Mozart and Salieri," all the remaining operas of Rimsky-Korsakof contain in some degree the fantastic element that was first introduced into Russian Opera in Glinka's second work. " A Night in May " and " Christmas Eve Revels," like Mousorgsky's " Sorochinsk Fair," are dramatized versions of tales from a famous series by Gogol. In the first, happiness is bestowed upon the hero through the benevolent intervention of a grateful water-nymph, the " russalka " of Slavonic legend. In this plot the Devil is regarded by some of the characters as being not the unlikeliest visitor to their village; but in " Christmas Eve Revels " he is a prominent figure, and his theft of the moon and stars—an act frequently associated with his Satanic Majesty in northern legendary lore—is the cause of a deal of mischief.

The worship of pagan gods, which is a feature of these two operas and of the opera-ballet " Mlada," appears again in " The Snow-Maiden "—in which the advent of spring receives a poetic handling not excelled in any other of the composer's operas—and once more in " The Legend of Kitej," the work of Rimsky-Korsakof's last period, which shows in its literary aspect the influence of " Parsifal." A pantheist by conviction, Rimsky-Korsakof delighted in dwelling

upon the beauty of natural phenomena and in calling attention, by means of his art, to the old-time devotional practices that survive in the ceremonial dances and games of the Russian peasant.

His study of such works as Afanasief's "The Slavonian Poetic Ideas of Nature" contributed not a little to the supernatural element in "Christmas Eve Revels"; and "The Snow-Maiden" is inspired by the belief that there could be no finer manifestation of religious feeling than the worship of Yarilo, the sun-god—a deity who makes an appearance both in that opera and in "Mlada."

The "opera-legend" "Sadko" comes under a distinct heading. Founded on the Novgorodian Cycle it is, like Borodin's "Prince Igor," in the nature of an epic. Its literary material is of two kinds, the real and the fantastic, and in scenes where the latter atmosphere prevails, such as the procession of sea-marvels in the Sea-King's domain, one finds a suggestion of the pantheistic sentiments of the composer.

Into the one opera that has not yet had mention the supernatural enters only to a very small extent. Dorosha, a sorcerer, an unimportant character in "Pan Voyevoda," which deals with Polish life in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, produces a bowl in which the act of divination by water is performed.

III.

When a comparison is made between the historical operas of Rimsky-Korsakof and those in which he was able to introduce the element of fantasy, it is quickly seen how gravely the composer was handicapped in treating "real" subjects. He had so great a genius for descriptive writing that a text such as that of "The Maid of Pskof" (with "Vera Sheloga"), "The Tsar's Bride," or "Servilia," places him at a serious disadvantage. His power of describing fantastic figures and of revealing their nature by means of orchestral devices is an exceedingly important item among the component qualities of his nationalism. One observes that wherever there is scope in the text for fantastic description, the orchestra is at once given a much more important rôle. There is already a beginning in the first act of his second opera, "A Night in May," when, in Levko's narration of the legend of the oppressed step-daughter, the orchestra paints the picture of her act of self-destruction; this orchestral episode contains the germ of the music which in the third act describes the unfortunate maiden, turned water-nymph and surrounded by her attendant "russalki," who disport themselves in choral games and dances.

It is a curious coincidence that the perusal of "The Snow-Maiden" should have brought Rimsky-Korsakof to the definite realization that the treatment of "real life" was not calculated to afford him full scope for

his descriptive powers, for it was in this dramatic study of Nature that Ostrovsky had signalized his departure from the consideration of the purely mundane. The scene of the enchanted forest (Act III), with its Wood Spirit, who transforms himself into a tree-stump having two glowworms for eyes, and the instantaneous growths that prevent the flight of the terrified Mizguir, is set to music which, but for the composer's emancipation from the bondage of "life" subjects imposed upon him by the decreed principles, might never have been written. It had become quite evident to him that, while the historical subject afforded greater scope for dramatic action, he could obtain ample compensation for the sacrifice when dealing with material such as that of "The Snow-Maiden."

His subsequent operatic output provides many examples of the orchestral reflection of fantastic scenes: the dance of stars and the procession of comets in "Christmas Eve Revels" (Act III), the scene on Mount Triglaf in "Mlada," the entertainment offered Sadko in the submarine palace of the Sea-King and the transformation of his daughter into the river Volkhof, the symphonic introduction to the second act and the final scene of "Tsar Saltan," which describe the wonders of the magic island of Buyan, the music which precedes the chorus of Snow Spirits in "Kashchei," the bird songs in the scene of the enchanted forest in "Kitej": all testify to Rimsky-Korsakof's power of applying his wonderful imaginative faculty

in the use of the individual instrument and of the collective orchestra.

Rimsky-Korsakof's recognition of the survival of many pagan customs in the ceremonial of popular dances and games has already been noted. As might have been anticipated, there is no neglect of this material in his operas; he employs folk-lore substance as the basis of a number of episodic songs and dances, and obtains thereby many splendid scenic and musical effects. His profound knowledge of and delight in the subject of folk-legend, and the artistic fashion in which he wields that knowledge, are responsible for the many decorative scenes which adorn not only the fantastic but the historical operas. In the first act of "The Maid of Pskof" there is a reference, in the nurse's song, to the whistling dragon Tugarin, a monster who bears some resemblance to the "deathless" Kashchei; "A Night in May" opens with a representation of the choral game "The Sowing of the Millet," in which occurs an invocation to Lado, the god of spring and of love; of this there is a further specimen in "The Snow-Maiden"; in the second act of "Mlada" there is a Circling Dance or Kolo, from which the Russian peasants derive their Khorovodes—in this Kolo is mentioned the god Koupala, the prototype of Yarilo the sun-god; in "The Tsar's Bride" is a song and dance, "The Hops," an old-time autumn ceremonial. The Trepaks and Gopaks in "The Snow-Maiden," "A Night in May," "Kitej," and "Kashchei," and the Lithuanian dance in "Mlada," go to prove that

Rimsky-Korsakof was alive to the advantages of national and local colour.

Owing to his copious employment of folk-song, he has been sometimes unjustly accused of a poverty of melodic invention. But, as some of the Russian critics have good reason to know, it is never safe to speak without the book in this matter, for Rimsky-Korsakof, like Glinka and Moussorgsky, became possessed, by an unconscious process, of the power of writing in the folk manner.

When dealing in genuine folk-songs, he employs them in more than one fashion. There are already specimens of complete songs to be found in the pages of his early operas, "The Maid of Pskof" and "A Night in May"; but in "The Snow-Maiden," in addition to such tunes as that of the birds' dance, the Carnival, the "Millet" chorus and others, he has used certain suitable fragments as a means of characterization. The very popular song of *Lel* (the third given to this character) is, however, original.*

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IV.

Rimsky-Korsakof's partiality for the folk-melody was strengthened by a fondness for modal music, in most cases the basis of these tunes. Several instances of modal writing occur in "The Snow-Maiden"; among them may be mentioned *Lel's* first song, the *Heralds' proclamation*, and the hymn of the *Berendeys*; others may be seen in the "*Millet*" chorus of "*A Night in May*" and in the dance of *Mænads* in the second act of "*Servilia*" (*Phrygian*); while in "*Kitej*," although not as rich in this respect as one might anticipate from the nature of the subject, there are three prominent themes in the *Æolian mode*, and one in the *Phrygian*, associated with the inhabitants of the temporarily invisible city.

Of Oriental colour, bequeathed to the Russian School by Glinka, there is an abundance both in the instrumental and operatic compositions of Rimsky-Korsakof. Besides the well-known "*Hindoo Merchant's song*" in "*Sadko*," there is a somewhat similar

Eastern episode in "Mlada," where, in a scene recalling that of the "opera-legend," a Moor cries his golden wares, and in a series of national dances (in the same work) there figures a "half-graceful, half-savage" Indian measure. In this opera also is the Eastern music one would expect to find in association with the character of Cleopatra. The florid passages sung by Queen Shemakha in "The Golden Cockerel" constitute a further example of a vein which appealed very strongly to the composer of "Sheherazade."

As might be expected, Rimsky-Korsakof, with such varied material at his command, had no difficulty in maintaining throughout the music of an opera the mood of its literary substance. He neglected no detail that could in any way contribute to the general homogeneity of style. Thus, when contemplating the composition of "Servilia," he argued that while there are no surviving data as to the character of the music of ancient Rome, this circumstance could not excuse the presence in such an opera of anything that bore the definite impress of some particular non-Roman nationality. He chose to write, therefore, in a manner partly Italian, partly Greek, and partly Byzantine, a procedure which he justifies on the ground that Roman art was borrowed from these sources.

Again, in "Sadko" he adopted a method of recitativo writing which resembles the declamatory intonation characteristic of the peripatetic rhapsodists when

reciting the Ryabinin legends.* "Running like a scarlet thread," he observes in his Memoirs, "throughout the opera, this imparts a national and historical complexion to the work." In "Kitej" he maintains the atmosphere of religious mysticism as successfully as he does that of the archaic in "Mlada," and the satirical in "The Golden Cockerel."

In the matter of operatic style Rimsky-Korsakof is not to be regarded as by any means a faithful apostle of the "Invincible Band." The dedication to Dargomijsky of the opera in which he implicitly observes the principles adopted by the "Five," must not be endowed with too great a significance. It was undertaken primarily as an exercise in vocal writing, in which department the composer was anxious to improve his resources. His attitude towards the principles was, in fact, as Pyatnitsky † observes, one of "enlightened liberalism," and at no time did he pledge himself to slavish obedience.

His life was spent in searching for an operatic method which should possess the quality of rationality without making a fetish of realism. He was not prepared to exalt life or even drama at the expense of melodious music. In this connection the preface to one of his operas is especially significant. The prefatory remarks printed in the score of "Tsar Saltan" call the attention

* From Trofim Grigorief Ryabinin, an Olenets peasant, P. H. Ruibnikof obtained, in 1860, a number of hitherto unwritten legends for his valued collection.

† "Thematic Analysis of 'Kitej,'" Petrograd, 1914.

of producers to the need of impressing upon the chorus the necessity of refraining, during the lyrical moments of the opera, from any kind of gesture or movement that might divert the attention of the audience from the singers, as "an operatic work is before everything a musical production."

V.

Whether the search for a *via media* that would avoid the austerity of declamatory opera and the licence of the purely melodic was successful, must be determined by the individual, according to his own views upon the operatic art. What Rimsky-Korsakof did attain was an individuality of style that has earned for his most characteristic works the honourable epithet of "Korsakovian"—a description current among Russian commentators. The mere mention of this classification, satisfying though it may be to the casual observer, will hardly suffice for the student.

It should be explained, therefore, that the operas of Rimsky-Korsakof are divisible into the three categories of Declamatory, Melodic, and Synthetic, and that the synthetic type of opera is the type associated with the composer's name.

The process through which the synthetic opera was evolved was as follows:

"The Maid of Pskof," Rimsky-Korsakof's first opera, is, as has been remarked, in the nature of a compromise. In it the composer, while respecting the

principles agreed upon with his colleagues, does not conform to their letter. The dramatic portions are declamatory, the lyrical in the form of *arioso*, but the choral scenes are conceived on rather broader lines than a strict observance of the Dargomijskian principles would permit.

In the second opera, "A Night in May," these principles appear to have been completely abandoned. It is as though the composer were seeking to prepare himself for the synthetic method by making sure of its primary components. "A Night in May" is a melodic opera, and so neglectful of his duty to the decrees of the "New Russian School" was the composer that he actually permitted himself the licence of including in it several self-contained numbers: duets, trios, and the like.

It must not be supposed, however, that "A Night in May" is in any sense a return to the Italian inanities against which the reformers had so resolutely set their face. The separate numbers, even in cases where there is no musical link whatever, do not occasion any interruption in the course of the drama; they are always relevant to the dramatic issue. It should also be noted that there is a certain amount of "melo-declamation," such as that of the scene in the Mayor's house (Act II).

With the third work, "The Snow-Maiden," came a definite approach to the synthetic type. Here there is already a judicious alloy of the melodic and the declamatory; here, also, is to be seen a more generous

and altogether broader employment of leading motives, and the method of using them is individual. They are not confined to an orchestral utterance but, penetrating to the vocal parts, are on occasion worked up into short melodies of which they are the foundation. Another device, first observed in this work, is that which Rimsky-Korsakof himself calls the "leading-harmony," a term which sufficiently describes the thing it represents. The presence in "The Snow-Maiden" of a number of quotations from traditional song has already been noted.

Up to this time the Russians possessed but little knowledge of the Wagnerian music-drama, but with the advent of Neumann's company, in 1889, Rimsky-Korsakof was able to familiarize himself with the method of the Teuton genius, and in some of his subsequent operas there is a decided trace of Wagnerian influence. This is already observable in "Mlada" and "Christmas Eve Revels." One notices a far greater wealth of symphonic writing, and the orchestra attains an independence hitherto denied it, more especially in the descriptive scenes. In the "opera-ballet" are to be heard some harmonies which have plainly been assimilated and, as the composer confesses, the leading motives are worked out in a fashion that was not entirely of his own inventing.

If it is in "The Snow-Maiden" that, as the composer avers, he definitely found himself, the completion of "Sadko" signalized the inauguration of that type of opera known as synthetic or "Korsakovian."

An examination of "Sadko" will provide ample means of forming an idea as to the import of these terms. The synthesis of styles is represented first in the direction of its literary constitution. Despite the spectacular character of the opera, the dramatic interest, though perhaps a little wanting in intensity, is never made to serve as a mere peg on which to hang the spectacle; there is, too, a nice balance between the real and the fantastic, the harmonization of the former being simple, while the latter evokes a greater harmonic complexity.

In the musical region a further synthesis is obtained by means of a masterly distribution of responsibility between the orchestra and the voice. But it is the adoption of the "legendary recitative" that, in the opinion of the composer, secures for his opera a place altogether apart, and it is in virtue of this device, together with a quite individual employment of the leading-motive system, that "Sadko" justifies its consideration as the perfect type of "Korsakovian" opera.

Conforming to this type, though in one instance deviating a little from its lines, are four other operas. In "The Tale of Tsar Saltan" Rimsky-Korsakof adheres to the method of keeping the real and fantastic elements separate, and he makes the distinction definite by employing instrumental music for the fantastic sections, and vocal for the real. To describe this procedure, and to classify the opera in which its workings are to be observed, the composer adopts the term "vocal-instrumental," and thus labels "Tsar

Saltan." A modification of the leading-motive system is noticeable in this work. The motives are not confined to the characters (only four are thus endowed), but are applied to events, occurrences in Nature, and the psychological phenomena associated with the *dramatis personæ*. There is no sign in "Tsar Saltan" that its composer is allowing his individuality to be dried up by the flame of Wagner's musical personality; in this, as in the later operas, one is able to recognize that Rimsky-Korsakof is an objectivist, and that even in "Kitej" "pantheism" describes his religious or spiritual attitude far better than "mysticism."

The reasons assigned by some writers for considering "Kashchei the Immortal" as a work that is not to be placed unreservedly in the category of "synthetic," and that the composer had completely succumbed to the Wagnerian influence, are not all of a convincing kind. The preponderance in "Kashchei" of declamatory writing is not so great as to justify its being considered as pertaining to that class, and the suggestion that the uncouthness of its harmonies should weigh with classifiers is a little beside the point. Harmonic uncouthness, as shown by musical history, is a purely relative thing, and as a rule this quality is proved in time to have represented nothing more than that the music thus stigmatized was progressive. That the harmony of Korsakof was on occasion, and particularly in "Kashchei," unexpected and seemingly uncouth, need not necessarily imply that it is all Wagnerian in manner. One is obliged to confess that

in some instances it is reminiscent,* and one can only assume that Rimsky-Korsakof, who was not the sort of man to be satisfied with imitation, had in the course of a profound study of Wagnerian methods assimilated enough to have become unconsciously a mild plagiarist. The really frivolous arguments are that the presence of the fanfares which open the preludes in "Saltan" is a result of an undue reverence for the ceremonial of Bayreuth; and that the idea of "redemption," which is the ethical basis of "Kashchei"—Nature's movement symbolizing social development—should stamp that work as being characteristic of the composer of "Parsifal," rather than as possessing "Korsakovian" attributes.

The spiritual content of the libretto, the religious mysticism with which the "book" and the score of "Kitej" have been suffused by Bielsky and Rimsky-Korsakof, has given rise to a comparison between this work and "Parsifal." But in virtue of the circumstances that the harmony of "Kitej" is by no means strikingly Wagnerian, that the opera contains just as much national as spiritual material, and that Rimsky-Korsakof, instead of revealing his own psychological consciousness, depicts that of the protagonists, the comparison cannot for long be maintained.

The desire to make the opera worthy of the synthetic denomination is very clearly manifested in "Kitej." The quality of its textual material was exceedingly

* In the last tableau there is a prominent melodic figure that cannot fail to recall the Pilgrims' Chorus in "Tannhäuser."

helpful. Apart from its dramatic value—once again, as in “Sadko” and “The Snow-Maiden,” somewhat slender—there is a considerable variety of interest. Reflected in the score of “Kitej,” one finds the musical expression of pantheism (in a woodland scene that is, of course, compared with the “Waldweben”), of religious ecstasy, of the pagan attitude towards the Christian, and of the ascetic attitude towards life. The characterization is as diverse as the individual and collective personalities are varied; the polyphonic character of the music associated with religious devotion is in wonderful contrast to the descriptive pages of the score. For the vocal parts, *arioso* prevails; but there is an abundance of melody which includes several folk-songs. Finally—and this is something more than a mere factitious aid to characterization—there is a complicated system of leading-motives, divided by the commentators into four categories, which include the “leading-harmonies” first met with in “The Snow-Maiden.”

“Kitej” is a fully synthetic music-drama in respect of literary substance as well as in the direction of operatic form. Korsakof’s last opera, “The Golden Cockerel,” is designed on a much smaller plan. There is a synthesis as to construction, but its literary interest does not afford the same scope for varying the character of its music. In one sense above all others, however, it is “Korsakovian.” The satire it contains—unfortunately smothered in the London performances, owing to an entirely misplaced emphasis

of the spectacular—is characteristic of a man who resented any sort of high-handed interference with the liberty of the subject, and the pungency of his protest was acknowledged when “The Golden Cockerel” was banned.

There is, of course, no direct evidence that Rimsky-Korsakof, in making his initial essays in operatic form, began with the deliberate intention of acquiring experience in the use of the two main contributory factors to the synthetic type he ultimately evolved. But in undertaking to set one of Pushkin’s “dramatic scenes” to music without altering the text, it is clear that, besides the definite plan of improving himself in the writing of melodic recitative, the impulse to try conclusions with the austere Dargomijskian method must have been present. “Mozart and Salieri,” though conforming to the principles of the “New Russian School,” has little in common with either “The Stone Guest” or Moussorgsky’s “The Match-maker.” It has none of the symphonic interest of the “gospel,” nor is there any of that notation of gesture which is so wonderful a feature of Moussorgsky’s fragment. Leading-motives play a very small part, and there are but few instances of tonal suggestion. The music is consistently Mozartean, and the little movement composed for Mozart’s “improvization” is a masterpiece that must cause us either to modify our idolization of the composer of “Don Giovanni,” or to place Rimsky-Korsakof within the same sanctum.

"Boyarina Vera Sheloga" is another essay the declamatory style of which was chosen partly for the same considerations as those determining the method of "Mozart and Salieri," and partly, as is obvious, in order that there should be no incongruity of style between this work and "The Maid of Pskof," to which it serves as Prologue.

VI.

It will easily be grasped that, as Rimsky-Korsakof did not himself attempt the classification of his operas, there is a certain amount of disagreement as to the placing of some of them. Thus, according to one authority, "Kashchei" belongs rightly to the declamatory order; while in another's view it earns a place in the same list with "Sadko." But there is no room for disagreement about either "The Tsar's Bride," "Servilia," or "Pan Voyevoda," so far as concerns their general character. One may be pardoned for assuming that when Rimsky-Korsakof so boldly disregarded the decreed canons in "A Night in May," he was fortified by Borodin's rebellious declaration that for him melody was a positive necessity of musical life. What lends weight to the supposition is that, in taking up the subject of his dead friend's abortive essay in declamatory opera, Rimsky-Korsakof seems to have been imbued with the spirit of the composer of "Prince Igor." "The Tsar's Bride" was not only to be definitely melodic, but was entirely to

ignore the Dargomijskian tradition. When we read what the composer has written on the subject—which is to the effect that he intended writing real ensembles in which people actually sang together—we are able to realize the spirit in which this opera was devised and carried out. It is a lyrical opera, and is a direct offspring of “A Life for the Tsar.” It begins with the conventional long overture, which is not, however, self-contained,* and is constructed apparently with a view to the provision of a feast of melody, in which Liouba’s unaccompanied song in the second act—repeated as an orchestral intermezzo—and Martha’s aria in the third are favourite dishes. The composer had by this time assimilated the folk-song manner to his own satisfaction, and was able to dispense with quotations, the only specimen used being the “Slavsya,” which serves as a motive for Ivan and which is coupled towards the close of the opera, when his choice of a bride is announced, with the theme by which he is represented in “The Maid of Pskof,” an allusion which recalls the self-quotings of Strauss and his advocate Shaw.

As to “Servilia” and “Pan Voyevoda,” little need be said. In both cases the literary interest is chiefly dramatic. In the matter of construction the one is as declamatory as the other is lyrical; the degree of deviation is common, both leaning, as it were, inwardly, or slightly towards the synthetic style.

* It was furnished by the composer with a “concert-ending.”

VII.

Nothing could better warrant the description of Rimsky-Korsakof as an "enlightened liberal" than his operatic creations. In it is reflected the mind of a man clearly determined that everything that could legitimately claim the attention of a composer should find a place in music-drama. Yet while acting generously toward the operatic art—repudiating the austere purism of the "New Russian School"—he was withal fastidious in his choice of material. But the special distinction of his dramatic work would seem to lie in that he beautified the whole not only by his treatment of the parts, but by the application of an unfailing instinct for appropriate combinations of material.

His texts are unvaryingly sound. That of "Sadko," derived from a number of chronicles of an archaic period and strung together by the composer,* gives some indication of the standard required of a libretto by the artist who arranged it. In Bielsky, the librettist of "Tsar Saltan," "Kitej," and "The Golden Cockerel," Rimsky-Korsakof found a collaborator entirely after his own heart. Between them there was a strong personal and artistic sympathy. The quality of Bielsky's work may be appreciated by anyone reading the texts of the three operas named; they are well worth the reading for their own sake. Yet

* Rimsky-Korsakof was assisted by Bielsky.

we know from the composer that he was not prepared to sacrifice any musical idea for the sake of his texts. "In an opera," reads the concluding sentence in the preface to "Sadko," "the rhythm of the poetry must be made to conform to the rhythm of the music, and not the inverse."

His employment of folk-music was particularly felicitous. Having often (to use his own phrase) listened to the voice of the People, he eventually acquired the power of incorporating not merely the substance of their utterance, but its manner, in the music of his operas.

When reading the views of Rimsky-Korsakof upon musico-dramatic construction, one creates for oneself the idea of an orchestra that plays a subordinate part in the scheme. But, important as would seem in comparison the rôle assigned to Wagner's orchestra, the symphonic interest in the Russian composer's operas is fairly abundant. The German makes of the orchestra a window through which we may peep into his soul. The Slav's window affords us a glimpse of Nature's world, and our eye seems to penetrate into its hidden secrets.

Even in assigning pre-eminence to the voice, he never for a moment reverts to the heresies of the purely vocal opera. In such operas as "Sadko" and "The Golden Cockerel," and in the opera-ballet "Mlada," there are some quite florid vocal passages, but *coloratura* is here employed as a means of securing an appropriate fantastic expression for a given character. In

his Memoirs, Rimsky-Korsakof refers to two eminent singers who approached him with the suggestion that he might compose an opera "for us." His manner of recording the incident leaves no doubt as to his views regarding the function of the singer in Opera.

Rimsky-Korsakof has, in short, enriched the form of Opera without sacrificing the dignity of the art. He has achieved far more than the establishment in Russia of an Opera positively pregnant with nationalism. The series of operas constituting his legacy to the lyric stage is a document which, combining all the approved elements of music-drama, creates by their fusion something altogether unique.

PART III

INSTRUMENTAL AND VOCAL COMPOSITIONS

I.

THE orchestral and, for the most part, the chamber music of Rimsky-Korsakof reveals that as a nationalist composer he was not entirely dependent upon the stage. In several of his orchestral works he used folk-tunes as a thematic basis. The Andante of the First Symphony, written during his stay in England, the themes of the Russian and Easter Overtures, and of the "Sinfonietta," are all from an autochthonous source; the "Serbian Fantasia" and the "Spanish Caprice" have a special interest as a manifestation of a nationalism that begins at home but does not end there. As for "Antar" and "Sheherazade," they are a very definite avowal of the influence of the near-Orient upon the Russian artist; and as this influence has flowed through the Caucasian channel, and has been widely assimilated by Russian poets, painters, and musicians, there would appear to be sufficient reason for considering the Oriental design and colouring of such works as Balakiref's "Islamey" and "Tamara," and the two descriptive orchestral pieces referred to above, as properly national.

In "The Tale," and the symphonic picture "Sadko," the procedure is rather more subtle. They have a Russian programme, but the music plays a suggestive part. No folk-tunes are employed, but the melodies are thoroughly in keeping with the character of the programme. There is a curious resemblance between the themes which, in each case, appear to represent the narrational thread.

It is not, however, permissible in this instance to speak of programme without an explanation that both in "The Tale" and "Sheherazade," as well as in "Sadko," the programmatic material is not described in the music, but is only suggested by it. With the exception of that representing Sheherazade's introduction to the stories told by her to the Sultan—the passage serving as a link—there are no really definite thematic associations in the work. The mission of the music is limited to a suggestion of the atmosphere of the "Arabian Nights."* Similarly in "The Tale," which is based on Pushkin's prologue to "Russlan and Ludmilla," the music does not refer to the literary material of Glinka's second opera, but merely suggests that a fairy story is being told by the miraculous chained cat, which feline fabulist stands in the same relation to the story of "Russlan and Ludmilla" as does the indefatigable Sheherazade to the "Arabian Nights."

* Annotations communicated by the composer sanction the association of certain passages in "Sheherazade" with episodes in the "Arabian Nights," but in such instances the music is for the most part symbolical rather than descriptive.

It seems hardly necessary to point out that, as an orchestral composer, Rimsky-Korsakof was influenced in no small degree by Glinka, particularly in the matter of literary, poetic, and thematic content. "The Tale," the "Russian Overture" and "Sinfonietta," and the "Spanish Caprice" are sufficiently eloquent testimony. The distinctively Russian device—accompanimental variation of an unvarying melody, as in "Sadko," is also the legacy of Glinka.

Like Glinka's, Rimsky-Korsakof's orchestral output had humble beginnings. Thus, when writing his first symphony, he was guided by a study of Glinka's scores, and used Berlioz' famous Treatise on Instrumentation as a prop.

He admits having had no clear idea of the distinction between the old-fashioned "natural" brass instruments, and the modern valve or chromatic variety, then more or less a novelty. He was not able to rely very much upon the assistance of his musical guide and philosopher, Balakiref, whose knowledge in this department was sparse. His own confession—viz., that he was attempting to run ere having learned to walk—would appear suitably to describe the circumstances of his early symphonic progress. In course of time, however, when presented with some golden opportunities of improving his technical knowledge, he availed himself of them with the same earnestness as characterized his studies in the technique of composition, succeeding eventually in attaining a mastery that was not excelled by any of his contemporaries.

But apart from this mastery—and the word is inadequate, since it implies merely the dexterous employment of traditional material in an orthodox and approved fashion—Rimsky-Korsakof must be credited with the introduction of a new treatment of the orchestra. He is responsible for a number of innovations in the region of instrumental grouping, and to his influence and teaching must be attributed the foundation of a distinct style of orchestration usually referred to as “Russian.”*

By his generous recognition of the units of an orchestra he has rendered a service which instrumentalists are not slow to acknowledge. In “Sheherazade,” “Sadko,” the “Spanish Caprice,” and the “Serbian Fantasia” he has made a feature of the instrumental solo, as though striving to show of what stuff the orchestral body consists and of what its units are separately capable. Thus in the “Spanish Caprice,” in which there are solo passages for all the melodic instruments, the composer has allowed even the “percussion” to be heard alone (*scena e canto gitano*), a procedure that would appear sufficiently rare. Another effect that seems to belong entirely to this composer is that heard in “The Tale,” where

* On more than one occasion Rimsky-Korsakof asserted that orchestration should be considered as part of the process of composition. Writing in 1904 to an acquaintance, he declined to accept a proffered congratulation on the alleged completion of his “Kitej.” “. . . Its full score alone is the finished form of an orchestral composition.”

the violins in three groups play a series of brilliant chords that sound as though coming from one instrument.

The achievement of Rimsky-Korsakof in this direction is twofold. By means of such works as are here mentioned he has insisted on a high standard of orchestral playing, and following the lead of Glinka, who wrote his orchestral fantasias for this very purpose, he has added to the symphonic repertory a series of works that will at one and the same time appeal to the sophisticated, and afford instruction and entertainment to the large public that listens to music but does not indulge in any closer form of study.

II.

In the composer's view his most important orchestral works are roughly divisible into two categories. In the first he places the symphonic picture "Sadko," "The Tale," and the "Easter Overture." "Antar" and the much later work "Sheherazade" are, he says, doubly akin, for they are both symphonic suites and both Oriental in character. With "Sheherazade" and the "Easter Overture" he links the "Spanish Caprice" as representing his attainment of maturity in the region of orchestral creation. The last work he refers to as having been influenced by Glinka; this is of course quite obvious. What might perhaps escape the superficial observer is that both "Sadko" and "Antar" owe something to Liszt's "Mephisto

Valse," a work which has more recently accounted for a stage in the evolution of Skryabin's art. Rimsky-Korsakof makes an open avowal of his indebtedness, and does not seek to conceal that what he might have preferred to regard as emulation is in reality more in the nature of imitation.

Having often expressed quite freely his opinion of his initial essays in composition he causes no surprise when, in respect of "Antar," he takes posterity into his confidence and gives a full and frank account of its origins and influences. The Antar theme was invented, he says, under the influence of Cui's opera "William Ratcliff";* another passage reflects the manner of Glinka's Persian Chorus ("Russlan and Ludmilla"), while the triplet accompaniment to the Antar theme owes something to Serof's "Rogneda." The A major episode of the third movement, like the F sharp major melody of the first ($\frac{6}{8}$), was taken from a French collection of Arab tunes, lent him by Borodin, and the principal theme of the fourth movement was harmonized and given him by Dargomijsky, who extracted it from Christianovich's compilation. Even the Gul-Nazar theme, which the composer once thought to be original, has since proved to be practically identical with a specimen of Arab popular song quoted

* Ivanof, the historian, calls attention to other thematic loans, and cites the resemblance between the passage in which Catarina (in Cui's "Angelo") resigns herself to a death by poison, and the music accompanying the Snow-Maiden's dissolution.

in Fétis's Encyclopædia. This circumstance the composer attributed to unconscious assimilation. After all this frankness we are not disposed to deny Rimsky-Korsakof's claim that "Antar," in view of his inexperience at the time of its creation, displays an astonishing mastery in the handling of the various themes.

A similar indebtedness manifests itself in the thematic content of "Sadko." In the passage describing Sadko's immersion is a reminiscence of Ludmilla's abduction, the whole-tone scale by which Glinka depicted his heroine's captor Chernomor being here replaced by the progression of alternate tones and semitones afterwards employed by Rimsky-Korsakof in "The Tale," "Antar" (third movement), and in the operatic works "The Maid of Pskof" and "Mlada." Harmonically also there are suggestions of outside influence, notably that of Liszt.

III.

On the question of "programme" the composer gives some idea of his intentions when dealing with "The Tale." It is, he says, to be considered as "abstract" music. But it has, nevertheless, a definite association with Pushkin's Prologue, which is established by means of certain symbolical *points d'appui* such as the trombone solo, in which we are right in seeing a musical representation of Baba-Yaga, and the flute passage (Allegro) which does duty as a description, or rather, a suggestion, of the *russalki*. These figures belong, as

the composer points out, to Pushkin, but he clearly warns the listener not to expect their presence to form part of a literal rendering in musical terms of the celebrated Prologue.

Coming to "Sheherazade" we are vouchsafed a definite indication of Rimsky-Korsakof's attitude towards the programmatic element in music. The characteristic melodies and figures in this work are not, he asserts, to be regarded as leading-motives, and in order to dispel any illusion to the contrary he calls attention to such instances as the trumpet call which is made to serve as the representation of two quite distinct ideas. And now he delivers himself of a statement that clears up any misapprehension on the point. The musical content of "Sheherazade" is designed to give a general impression of its literary basis: when inserting the titles to his movements (they were subsequently discarded), his intention was that of giving a lead to the listener, to indicate the channel through which the composer's imagination had flowed when writing the music. It should be observed, in conclusion, that this programmatic vagueness is not to be construed as an excuse for the employment of Rimsky-Korsakof's music as the orchestral accompaniment of a Ballet of which the story has little or nothing in common with that which inspired our composer!

In the literary basis of the "Easter Overture" we get a glimpse of Rimsky-Korsakof's spiritual outlook and observe once more his inclination towards pantheism. In this work he has sought to emphasize

the contrast between the orthodox celebration of festivals and the pagan rites in which they originated. Even the bell music in which he reproduces the sounds he heard as a boy, when he lived near the Tikhvin Monastery, evokes from him an idea which would hardly commend itself to the conventionally devout: he prefers to regard it as a species of instrumental dance-music, sanctioned by the orthodox Russian Church. The orchestral figure employed to describe the bells appears again in the Prelude "At the Grave," composed on the death of Belayef.

Reference to the bell-sound—one of the most popular of the devices drawn upon by Russian nationalist composers—recalls the quip attributed to Cui, who declared that Korsakof's instrumentation of the chimes in "Boris" sounded more like the original than the original itself. This paradoxical remark would appear to characterize the composer of "Antar" and "Sheherazade" as a master of the orchestra. When writing symphonic music he thought in orchestral terms; he strove continuously to perfect himself in his handling of the medium, incurring among critics an allegation that he was obsessed by a mania for "polish." This, in reality, was no exaggerated estimate of the importance of a complete orchestral mastery, but simply the outcome of a desire that the symphonic expression of any particular idea should be something more than a mere version, that it should be not only the music's most expressive form but an integral part of the music itself.

IV.

Beyond his solicitude for the individual instrument, the chamber music of Rimsky-Korsakof does not afford any great interest. Considering the extent to which—in his symphonic creations—the composer relies upon effects of colour, it is surprising that, in his works for string combinations, he does not strive, like his compatriot Tchaikovsky and many another composer of modern times, after orchestral effects. On the contrary, the manner of his first essay, the string quartet in F, a work written more or less as an exercise in which to test himself after his studies in counterpoint, is repeated in the majority of his subsequent works of the kind. The interest is chiefly melodic, for the contrapuntal efforts of the quartet, culminating in an ingenious though only partially successful Finale, are hardly improved upon in the posthumously published string sextet, in which there are two highly complicated movements, a *rondo fugato* and a *scherzo*. And unfortunately, apart from the movements that are in the folk-style, there is an absence of melodic charm.

In the series of collaborative chamber works, which are so interesting a feature of Russian music, Rimsky-Korsakof shows himself capable of carrying out his share in the programme. The Allegro for the string quartet on the theme B-La-F, dedicated to the great Russian musical patron, is an eminently suitable

movement; while the concluding Khorovod in the work which celebrates Belayef's birthday is full of a gaiety that reminds one of the music in the festive sections of "Sadko" and "The Golden Cockerel." To the "Vendredi" series, a number of little pieces composed by the *personnel* of Belayef's celebrated musical Friday evenings, Rimsky-Korsakof contributed the initial Allegro of the second volume, a movement that is successful if considered in relation to its context, but is not in any way likely to add to its composer's reputation.

In referring to his early essays in chamber music, Rimsky-Korsakof excuses their shortcomings by explaining that his technical education was then incomplete and that the contrapuntal manner had not yet entered into his being. But to judge by the weaknesses of the specimens he has left, one prefers to assume that chamber music was not his *métier*. The art of the composer of "Mlada" only attained its highest level when he was able to work on material that allowed of his using a large canvas, on which either broad splashes of colour or a multitude of widely varied effects could be employed. Rimsky-Korsakof was a musician whose gift lay in the region of the descriptive. He was inspired by his own lively appreciation of his subject. Of this his orchestral and operatic works are a sufficient proof; his chamber music is an endorsement.

V.

The solo-instrumental examples do not call for a modification of this verdict. The piano concerto, which is apparently the fruit of Lisztian influence, has in some quarters been acclaimed as a work that worthily bears its dedication to the great pianist; but the circumstance of its having been conceived as a specimen of cyclic construction has not endowed it with any superlative merit as music, and it must at this date be considered as music belonging to a given moment, depending upon its association with the condition of musical affairs at that moment for its interest.

A violin fantasia on two Russian airs possesses no importance whatsoever. Those experienced in Russian music will possibly marvel that, with such a wealth of folk-melody at the disposal of Russian composers, the same tune should have appeared in this, in the "Vendredis," and "Variations" quartet collections.

Rimsky-Korsakof's contributions to the "Paraphrases" or "Chopsticks" series show him to possess a greater fertility of imagination, but far less charm of manner, than those accomplished miniaturists Lyadof and Cui. The tonal scale in the bass of one of the variations appears to be the only instance of its employment by a Russian composer in music of a cheerful kind!

Rimsky-Korsakof's choral works have not met with any great success.

"Svitezanka," "The Doom of Oleg" (based on Pushkin's poem), a setting of the same poet's "Upas Tree," and the revolutionary song "Doubinoushka," prompted by the events of 1905, have all been performed in Russia. Their failure is ascribed by their composer to a want of interest in such compositions, the solo-vocalists preferring to present themselves in purely solo examples, and the chorus in exclusively choral works, while the publisher shows a distaste for material that is not bought by the public! It may be safely conjectured that a Russian orchestra would prefer to be heard in such indulgent numbers as "Sheherazade" or the "Spanish Caprice."

The choice of "The Doom of Oleg" for the New-castle-on-Tyne Festival of 1909 was probably a manifestation of the very different state of affairs prevailing in this country.

VI.

An examination of Rimsky-Korsakof's songs forces one to the adoption of two conclusions: that his best work in this region was done at the beginning of his career, at which time his vocal writing seems to have suffered little from his ignorance of technique, and to have gained much as the first flow of a not too abundant lyrical inspiration; and secondly that the composer reached his highest level in song-writing when affecting the Eastern idiom. Thus the Oriental Romance (from op. 2) was never excelled, and, if equalled, its

peers are to be found in such examples as "The Hills of Georgia," "The Fir Tree and the Palm" (from op. 3), and in the much later song, "I Love Thee, O Moon" (from op. 41), in which an Indian reminiscence is clearly responsible for the happy melodic inspiration. The last-named specimen stands out from a number of songs in which the glorified accompaniment provides an interest far superior to that of the vocal line.

It is assumed by one of the foremost Russian critics that Rimsky-Korsakof was too often inclined to regard his songs as studies for operatic writing, and this seems probable when one reads between the lines of his *Memoirs*. But this does not account for the tendency, noticeable in the composer's vocal works, to exalt (as Cui puts it in his disquisition "Russian Song") the accessory at the expense of the essential. The accompaniment in Rimsky-Korsakof's songs, says Cui, bears the same relation to the melody as does a handsome frame to an insignificant picture. For this reason vocalists have neglected the greater part of his considerable contribution to their repertory. Among his songs are some exceedingly worthy specimens of descriptive music, such, for instance, as "The Nymph" (op. 56), but the singer is not likely to be satisfied in figuring as a pretext for the performance of a beautiful accompaniment.

"Some of his songs and their accompaniments remind me," aptly remarks Mrs. Newmarch in "The Russian Opera," "of those sixteenth-century portraits

in which some slim, colourless, but distinguished Infanta is gowned in a robe of brocade rich enough to stand by itself, without the negative aid of the wearer." But in dealing with such a song as "The Nymph," we have to substitute Cui's metaphor of the ornate frame for the slender subject.

Rimsky-Korsakof was, as we know, richly endowed with the musico-descriptive faculty, and had a very correct notion of the vocal *tessitura*. Had he possessed in the same ⁷measure a lyrical gift, his songs would surely have been unsurpassed.

OPERATIC SYNOPSES

THE MAID OF PSKOF

In Three Acts and Four Tableaux.

IVAN THE TERRIBLE, desirous of removing the autonomous power hitherto the prerogative of the city of Pskof, descends with his army upon its people. But discovering that the adopted daughter of the Governor is the child of Vera Sheloga, whom many years before he had himself betrayed, he is impelled to act with clemency.

A NIGHT IN MAY

In Three Acts and Four Tableaux.

Near a Little-Russian village stands, at the lakeside, a haunted house. Here, according to legend, there dwelt a Pole, whose second marriage brought upon his daughter a stepmother's hatred. Despair drives the girl to drown herself. Becoming a "russalka," she contrives to lure her enemy into the water, but the stepmother, now one of many water-nymphs, can no longer be identified.

This story is told by Levko, the son of the village Headman, to Hanna, his betrothed. His father, a rival, refuses his consent to their union. Levko, overhearing the addresses paid by the Headman to Hanna, prevails upon some friends to "bait" his father. The Headman, incensed by an uproar outside his house, rushes out, and in the dark incarcerates his sister-in-law, whom he mistakes for the ringleader. He then discovers that his son is to blame, and hurries off in search of the culprit. The same night Levko, singing before

the haunted house, is requested by the Pannochka (Polish) russalka to establish the identity of her stepmother, and, succeeding, is rewarded with a letter, apparently in the handwriting of a high official, commanding the Headman to expedite the marriage of his son with Hanna.

THE SNOW-MAIDEN

In Four Acts and a Prologue.

Sniegourochka, the daughter of Frost and Spring, is deaf to her parents' warning, and resolves to leave her woodland solitude and to seek the companionship of mortals. Her numb heart is warmed by the songs of Lel, the shepherd, but her inclination for him meets with no response, for Lel is in love with Koupava. She is the affianced of Mizguir, a Tatar, and in his breast Sniegourochka kindles so fierce a flame of passion that he deserts his betrothed. Sniegourochka, bewildered by the vagaries of Cupid, returns to her mother, who, in maternal solicitude, bestows upon her ill-fated child the power of human love. But no sooner does the Snow-Maiden utter, at the dictates of her newly awakened sensibility, an avowal of love for Mizguir, than a ray of the warm spring sun falls upon her and she floats to Heaven in a vapour.

MLADA

Opera-Ballet, in Four Acts and an Apotheosis.

Mstivoi, Prince of Rhetra, having designs upon the neighbouring principality of Arkonsk, has caused his daughter, Voislava, to present to Mlada, the bride of Yaromir, its ruler, a poisoned ring. Not caring to depend upon her own charms for the captivation of the bereaved Yaromir, now expected as a visitor to her father's palace, Voislava invokes the aid of the infernal goddess Morena, who, unknown to the former, has taken the earthly shape of her nurse, and has herself suggested this step. Yaromir conceives a passion for Voislava which

even survives a dream in which the cause of his bride's death is revealed, but so surely as he attempts to embrace his consoler the Shade of Mlada intervenes, and ultimately succeeds in carrying him off. Returning, he kills Voislava, whose soul descends to Hades with Morena.

CHRISTMAS EVE REVELS

In Four Acts and Nine Tableaux.

Solokha, a witch, has taken a fancy to the elderly Cossack Choub, but is greatly hampered by her son Vakoula's courtship of Oxana, the Cossack's daughter. Anticipating that during Choub's visit to the Sacristan there will be a meeting between the lovers, Solokha arranges with the Devil, whose ire has been aroused by a caricature drawn by Vakoula on the wall of the village church, to steal the moon and stars. In the darkness Choub, travelling in a circle, arrives back home and is refused admittance by Vakoula, who imagines him to be a rival. Meanwhile, Oxana accepts Vakoula on condition that he will secure for her a pair of the Empress's shoes. Nothing daunted, Vakoula seeks the Imperial Presence, and is duly rewarded, first with the shoes, and then by his lady's favour.

SADKO

Opera-Legend in Seven Tableaux.

Sadko, a poor but spirited minstrel, wagers his head against the wealth of the Novgorod merchants that he will catch golden fish in the neighbouring Lake Ilmen. Aided by the Sea-King's daughter he wins, and embarks upon a voyage on one of the fleet of ships that have become his. Overtaken by storm, it is decided by the ship's company that one of their number must be offered as a sacrifice to the Sea-King. Lots are drawn, with the result that Sadko finds himself on a plank in mid-ocean.

Entering the Sea-King's domain, he plays upon his gusli with such goodwill that the monarch and his court are soon engaged in a frenzied dance. A fierce gale ensues. St. Nicholas, intervening on behalf of seafarers above, dashes the gusli to the ground, orders Sadko home, and transforms the Sea-King's daughter, who has offered herself to the already married minstrel, into the river Volkhof, on which Novgorod now stands.

MOZART AND SALIERI

Dramatic Duologue in Two Scenes.

Salieri, jealous of the success of Mozart, resolves upon poisoning him. He invites his rival to a meal, during which there is a discussion as to the possibility of genius and crime being united in one mind. Salieri, having heard the Requiem that Mozart had composed at the behest of a mysterious stranger, drops the poison into his glass, and when Mozart withdraws, indisposed but unconscious of the cause, is plunged into remorse, fearing that his murderous act may signify that he is himself no genius.

BOYARINA VERA SHELOGA

Prologue in One Act.

Vera, the wife of Ivan Sheloga, who is absent at the War, is singing her child to sleep. Nadejda, her sister, learns that the child is not Sheloga's, but the mother refuses to divulge more than that one day, when on her way to the Pechersky Monastery, she had become faint, and had found herself, on regaining consciousness, in the tent of a stranger, who subsequently visited her at her home. Hardly has she finished her story when her husband returns. When he puts the question, "Whose is that child?" Nadejda, to shield her sister, proclaims herself the mother.

(The child is Olga, the Maid of Pskof, her father is Ivan the Terrible.)

THE TSAR'S BRIDE

In Three Acts and Four Tableaux.

Martha, the daughter of the Novgorod merchant Sobakin, is to marry the boyard Lykof; but Gryaznoy, one of Ivan the Terrible's bodyguard, has sworn that she shall be his, and obtains from Bomely, the Tsar's doctor, a potion with which he intends to destroy her memory. His discarded mistress Liouba, aided by Bomely, substitutes another concoction that is to mar her beauty. This Martha drinks. Meantime, in accordance with a royal custom, Ivan the Terrible has been endeavouring unseen to select a bride. His choice falls upon Martha. When she hears from Gryaznoy that Lykof, her betrothed, has been executed for attempting to poison her, she loses her reason. Liouba, confessing to her act, is stabbed by Gryaznoy, who gives himself up to justice.

THE TALE OF TSAR SALTAN

In Four Acts and Seven Tableaux.

Tsar Saltan overhears three sisters who are confiding to each other their views on the subject of happiness. The youngest, having declared that she would wish nothing better than to become the mother of a hero, is chosen by Saltan for his bride. While he is at the War the jealous sisters plot against the young queen, who with her little son is consigned to the waves in a barrel, which drifts on to an island. One day the Tsarevich, now a sturdy youth, saves a swan from a pike that is pursuing it. He is rewarded with magic powers enabling him to build a Wonder-City, over which he is chosen to reign, and the swan, having resumed her former estate of Princess, consents to share his throne. Returning from the Wars, Tsar Saltan hears of the famous island, and journeying thither is reunited with his queen.

SERVILIA

In Five Acts.

Servilia, daughter of the senator Soranus, is desired by her father to contract an alliance with Trasea, but the latter, hearing of her preference for his adopted son Valerius, withdraws his suit. Egnatius, the freedman of Soranus, being enamoured of Servilia, conspires against his master and Trasea, and intimates to Servilia that her submission alone will secure their safety. Valerius has mysteriously disappeared, and Servilia, becoming a convert to Christianity, renounces the World. Called before the tribunal, Trasea and Soranus are sentenced to banishment, while Servilia is awarded to Egnatius. Valerius now returns, bearing a proclamation from Nero that the tribunal is dissolved. The sudden reappearance of her lover causes Servilia's death, and Valerius is only prevented from destroying himself by the intervention of his foster-father. Egnatius, in his woe, invokes the Divine Being, and the rest join him in acclaiming the Christian God.

KASHCHEI THE IMMORTAL

In One Act and Three Tableaux.

The beautiful Tsarevna is held captive and spellbound in the magic kingdom of the monster Kashchei, where she hourly awaits deliverance at the hands of Ivan Korolevich, her lover. The latter, seeking Kashchei's "death" (which according to tradition is an object that, once found, will end the ogre's existence), is waylaid by Kashcheievna, Kashchei's daughter. She prevails upon him to drink a potion, promising him that by this means he will find the sought-for "death." His enslaver is about to kill him when the benevolent Burya Bogatyr awakens the hero, and transports him on a magic carpet to Kashchei's kingdom. Kashcheievna makes a further effort to secure Ivan for herself, promising him the release of his betrothed; and when the latter gives expression to a feeling

of pity for her, she weeps. It is in the tears of his daughter that Kashchei's "death" is hidden, and at their flow his kingdom crumbles and the monster dies. The lovers regain their freedom, and Kashcheievna is transformed into a weeping willow.

PAN VOYEVODA

In Four Acts.

Maria Oskolsky is in love with Boleslaf Chaplinsky, but is coveted by Pan Voyevoda, who disregards her lover's claim. Yadviga, who has designs upon the Voyevoda, obtains from a sorcerer, Dorosha, a poison which during a banquet she pours into Maria's glass; but the Voyevoda, drinking from it in error, expires, and Chaplinsky, who is lying under a sentence of death, is released.

THE TALE OF THE INVISIBLE CITY KITEJ AND THE MAIDEN FEVRONIA

In Four Acts and Six Tableaux.

While singing the praises of Nature in a forest near Little Kitej, the maiden Fevronia is surprised by a stranger, who is captivated by her beauty and obtains her consent to marry him. On his departure, she learns that he is the son of the Prince of Kitej. The city is attacked by Tatars, who have been guided thence by Grishka Koutermma, a drunken reprobate.

Fevronia is seized and carried off, praying that Kitej may be saved.

When the Tatars press their attack the City is rendered invisible, and its reflection is seen on the surface of the Lake. Fevronia escapes and, together with the now repentant Koutermma, enters the forest. Here she is visited by birds of Paradise, and the spirit of her betrothed, who has been killed. Having eaten of the bread that brings eternal happiness, Fevronia departs with the spirit. Kitej is restored to its transfigured People.

THE GOLDEN COCKEREL

In Three Acts.

King Dodon takes counsel with his nobles in order to devise a means whereby the constant plotting of a neighbouring hostile ruler may be frustrated. Ere a practicable scheme has been evolved, there enters an Astrologer, who proffers a golden cockerel. With the bird watching over the city the king may sleep; danger will be sounded by a warning crow. At the cockerel's first alarm the king despatches his two sons to lead his army; at the second he decides to betake himself to the field of battle. The first sight that meets his gaze is that of his two sons, who have done each other to death. At dawn he perceives a tent. Dodon and his General mistake this as belonging to the leader of the opposing army, but to their astonishment there emerges from it the lovely Queen of Shemakha. She completely infatuates and ruthlessly fools the old Dodon, who finally asks her to share his throne. On their return in state to the capital, Dodon is reminded by the Astrologer of his promised token of gratitude. The king, asking his price, is horrified by a demand for the person of his bride. Infuriated, he slays the Astrologer. The queen deserts him, and he is killed by the golden beak of the avenging cockerel.

(In a brief Epilogue, the Astrologer returns to life and assures the spectators that only he and the queen are mortals; what they have witnessed is but a fantasy.)

SYMPHONIC SYNOPSES

ANTAR

I.

ANTAR, having sworn eternal enmity to mankind on account of the wrongs done him, has renounced human society and has sought the ruins of Palmyra, a city erected by the spirits of darkness. His solitary communings are suddenly interrupted by the appearance of a slender and charming gazelle; Antar prepares to follow, but at this moment perceives that a gigantic bird is pursuing the gazelle. With his lance he drives off the winged monster, which flies away with a piercing cry. The frail quarry has also vanished. Antar, musing over the episode, falls into slumber. In a vision he sees himself transported to the magnificent palace of the Queen of Palmyra, the fairy Gul-Nazar; his ear is enchanted by the song of a bevy of slaves. The Queen, who is none other than the rescued gazelle, offers Antar the three supreme delights of human existence. He accepts, and the dream is dispelled.

II.

The first is the joy of Revenge.

III.

The second is the enjoyment of Power.

IV.

The third is the sweetness of Love.

Antar implores the Queen, if ever she should suspect the waning of his passion for her, to take his life; this she promises. When, after a prolonged period of happiness the Fairy observes that Antar's gaze turns longingly towards the horizon, she divines the cause and embraces him passionately. His heart is scorched by the fire of love, and in Gul-Nazar's arms he dies.

SHEHERAZADE

The Sultan Shahriar, convinced that all women are by nature false, has vowed to slay each of his wives on the morrow of the nuptials. But the Sultana Sheherazade contrives to fascinate her murderous lord by recounting a series of wondrous tales, and after a thousand and one nights spent in listening to her fantasies the Sultan renounces his terrible resolve.

LIST OF PRINCIPAL WORKS

OPERAS

See Synopses p. 111.

ORCHESTRA

Symphony, op. 1. Symphonic Picture, "Sadko," op. 5. Serbian Fantasia, op. 6. Symphonic Suite, "Antar," op. 9. Overture on Russian Themes, op. 28. "The Tale," op. 29. Sinfonietta on Russian Themes, op. 31. Symphony, op. 32. Spanish Caprice, op. 34. "Sheherazade," op. 35. Easter Overture, op. 36.

CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA

45 "Svitezyanka," op. 44. Cantata for soprano, tenor, chorus and orchestra. "The Ballad of the Doom of Oleg," op. 58, for male voices and orchestra. "From Homer," op. 60, Prelude-Cantata for female voices, women's chorus and orchestra.

CHAMBER MUSIC

String Quartet, op. 12. Contributions to "Belayef," "Birthday" and "Friday" Collections. String Sextet, for two violins, two violas and two 'cellos; posthumous. Quintet, for piano, flute, clarinet, horn and bassoon; posthumous.

SOLO AND ORCHESTRA

73 ~~1911~~ Piano Concerto, op. 30.

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About sixty, also a number of vocal duets.
Collection of one hundred Russian folk-songs.

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